



STIRLINGSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.

No.....

LIBRARY SCHEME.

Class.....

Vols.....

Readers are requested to take great care of the books while in their possession, and to point out any defect that they may observe in them to the Local Librarian.

All books should be returned to the Library within fourteen days from the date of issue; but an extension of the period of loan will be granted when desired.

If Infectious Disease breaks out in any house where there is a library book, the Honorary Local Librarian should be notified. The book itself must NOT be returned to the Local Library until further instructions are received. No fine will be payable under these conditions.

Students using the County Rural Libraries are reminded that the special resources of the Central Library for Scottish Students are available to them. Applications for service from this Central Library should be accompanied by particulars as to the books desired. All such applications should be made through the County Librarian.



976
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND
LENDING SERVICES
RESERVE STOCK NO.

QV71036

4299



By Dr. Walter E. Traprock, F.R.S.S.E.U.

The Cruise of the Kawa
My Northern Exposure
Sarah of the Sahara

SARAH OF THE SAHARA

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND
LENDING SERVICES
RESERVE STOCK No.





Super-Stars of Traprock's Super-Feature Film "Sarah of the Sahara"

SARAH OF THE SAHARA

A ROMANCE OF NOMADS LAND

BY

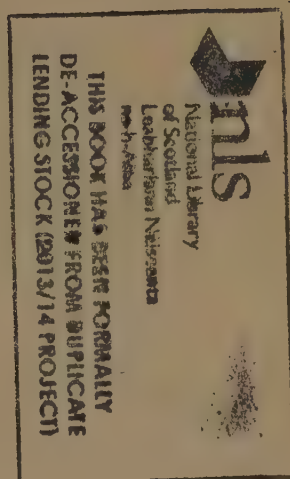
WALTER E. TRAPROCK

AUTHOR OF "THE CRUISE OF THE KAWA,"
"MY NORTHERN EXPOSURE"

WITH SEVENTEEN FULL PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1923



Copyright, 1923
by
G. P. Putnam's Sons



Made in the United States of America

To
S. W.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
Love at First Sight	1
CHAPTER II	
Our First Interview	19
CHAPTER III	
Into the Great Unknown	35
CHAPTER IV	
The Wandering Wimpoles	53
CHAPTER V	
Love and Lions	67
CHAPTER VI	
A Desperate Predicament	87
CHAPTER VII	
The Escape	109
CHAPTER VIII	
Sheik to Sheik	121
CHAPTER IX	
Mine at Last!	139

	PAGE
CHAPTER X	
Death in the Desert	157
CHAPTER XI	
Antony and Cleopatra	167
CHAPTER XII	
The Tomb of Dimitrino	181
CHAPTER XIII	
Buried Alive	195
CHAPTER XIV	
Love Lost	207

ILLUSTRATIONS

(From photographs taken for the Super-Feature Film of Dr.
Traprock's story recently released by the All-for-Art
Production Co. of Derby, Conn.)

	PAGE
SUPER-STARS OF TRAPROCK'S SUPER-FEATURE FILM	
"SARAH OF THE SAHARA"	<i>Frontispiece</i>
LADY SARAH WIMPOLE	7
LORD HORACE WIMPOLE	27
AB-DOMEN ALLAH	47
AT THE OASIS OF ARAG-WAN	57
A DESERT DIANA	71
ALONE AT LAST	83
REGINALD WHINNEY	91
AZAD THE TERRIBLE	101
ZALOOF	117
THE RESCUE	127
SHEIK TO SHEIK	135
TWIN BEDOUINS OF THE EAST	151

	PAGE
AN EGYPTIAN DEITY	175
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ASSOUAN	187
IN THE SHADOW OF THE PYRAMID	213
SAD MEMORIES	221

SARAH OF THE SAHARA

CHAPTER I

Love at First Sight

SARAH OF THE SAHARA

CHAPTER I

"Allah! Allah! Bishmillah. El Traprock, Dhub ak Moplah! . . . Wullahy! Wullahy!"

Long, long after their echoes have died away the cries of my desert men ring on my ears. Still do I see myself as, in a cloud of dust, at the head of my band of picked nomads, my burnous floating above me so that I looked like a covered wagon, with the drumming thunder of a hundred hoofs and the wild yells of my followers, I swept like a cyclone to the rescue of one of the fairest creatures of my favorite sex.

O Sarah! my desert mate, whom I have hymned in terms of pomegranates, peacock's-eyes and alabaster columns, lovely lady for whom I trained my tongue to the notes of the nightingale and my fingers to the intricacies of the lute, elusive creature, startled doe that ever fled before my bent bow

and keen-edged arrows only to be struck down at last by agonizing love, light of my spirit, breath of my soul, warmth of my body, why, O all-of-these-and-much-more, did'st thou flee from El Sheik Traprock, Dhub of the Moplah Tribe? . . . Wul-lahy!

Alas! She may not answer, my fair bride of the silences, for she has been plucked from me, she has passed beyond my ken. Let me then speak for her, my sweet bird, my tower of gold-and-ivory, my tall building agleam with rubies, my . . . but first let me descend from the heaven of her memory and cease from singing of the musical Moplahs.

In other words let me get back to earth and, in regular language, try to describe her as I first saw her.

.

It was on the pier-head at Cannes: the time, sunset. She stood, outlined against the flaming sky, a tall, angular figure. In the fading light I took no note of details but there was that in the woman's silhouette which gripped me. My heart stopped . . . missed a beat . . . and hurried on.

Strange and mysterious, the influence of human personalities! Her mere presence was a challenge

at which I bristled. Through my nerve-centers flashed deep messages of interest, attraction . . . animosity. Here, plainly, was no easy quarry.

As tense and alert as a setter on-the-point I stood watching the lean figure. At the back of my head I felt a light tickling sensation as if a hand had passed upward over my hair; my nostrils, I dare say, dilated.

Her back was toward me and she was gazing at the luminous waters of the "Baie des Anges." Caught in her close-cropped, reddish-brown hair the last sun's rays shone in a golden aureole so that in this respect she might have been one of the angels for whom the bay is named. But the angelic suggestion ended there. In all else she was warm, vital, human, a vibrant personality with a hint of almost masculine strength beneath the folds of her tan silk jacket and short walking skirt. One arm was akimbo and through the triangle thus formed I could see, by odd coincidence, the distant shape of my yawl, the Kawa, from which I had just landed.

My arrival in Cannes had been meaningless, the chance debarkation of a wanderer in search of rest after arduous voyaging in the far North, the aimless pursuit of warmth, comfort and sunshine. I

LADY SARAH WIMPOLE

"Her mere presence was a challenge at which I bristled. Here was no easy quarry."



Lady Sarah Wimpole

had intended, as far as my formless plans had any intention, stopping over the night at Cannes, then pushing on to the various Mediterranean ports, through Suez to the great East. My vague objective was the Nicobars, off Sumatra, where I had promised to call on a devoted old Andamanian when the opportunity offered.

Now, in an instant all that was changed. Vanished my Andamanian friend, my vague intentions. Here, within a few feet of me, in the person of this unknown woman was adventure, mystery, romance, an immediate objective, a citadel to be stormed, a problem to be solved, an adversary to be overcome, a mate to be . . . who knows what lies in wait for him around the corner? I only know that in a twinkling life had become purposeful, fascinating, electric.

She seemed to feel something of this riotous zip which I was projecting toward her for she turned suddenly and with a quick, awkward gesture, pulled on a soft straw hat and began walking in my direction. I immediately withdrew among a maze of packing-cases, orange boxes and other freight with which the pier was cumbered. Instinct told me it was not the time for our meeting. I had come ashore only for a few necessary supplies and I was

very much in fatigue uniform. Also I was barefooted in which condition a man can never look his best.

A moment later she strode unsuspectingly past the pile of orange boxes which screened me. I caught the impression of a distinctly patrician type with rigidly drawn features in which an aquiline nose predominated. I had only a glimpse but, as in the wink of a camera shutter, a clear image of that austere profile was imprinted upon the sensitive plate of my soul. Developing and printing were to come later. One thing was certain; she was a personage, not a mere person.

At the end of the pier she vanished. Vaulting from my fruit crate I made toward the string-piece where my dingy was gently bumping. I must make ship and haul my evening clothes from stowage. Once more I was on the trail.

.

Fate does not cheat those who trust her. Without arrangement on my part I saw my lady again within three days. It was bound to happen.

Though changed entirely as to costume, I knew her instantly. She was at the roulette table in the glittering *salle-de-jeu* at Monte Carlo. From afar

I saw the tip of a blue ostrich plume, the nodding feathers of which seemed to brush against my consciousness. They could belong to none other.

Again the imperious call and challenge flashed between us as I took a seat opposite hers where I could study her features while I tossed my chips on the table. She looked up at once and I held her with my gaze. For the first time our glances met. I was oblivious of my surroundings. The brilliant room, the gay crowd, the alert croupier, all sank into nothingness as I focussed my eyes on hers, resolved that in this first interchange I should not yield. Her eyes, amazingly blue, looked into mine for a long instant, then dropped to the Cross of St. Botolph which glittered on my shirt-bosom. I wore no other jewels save the agate-and-iron signet ring which his Britannic majesty—but that is neither here nor there. A faint smile played at the corners of my lady's lips. It was enough. She had taken note of my presence.

She was plainly a great lady of the type which England alone can produce, one of those rangy, imperial, dominating creatures in whom seem to be compacted innumerable generations of conquering invaders, Derby-winners, stalwart cricketers and astute statesmen. The prevailing color of her per-

son was red, or, to be more accurate, sandy, the short hair being without any tinge of the pink or henna which reeks of the coiffeurs' art. Her complexion was of a salmon or apricot shade, made almost golden by the overtone of pale, downy fuzz which so often accompanies it. Crowning the crisply curled locks was a regal tiara of large emeralds into which the blue ostrich feather was stuck at a jaunty angle. Never before had I seen a tiara on bobbed hair and the effect coupled with the red and green color scheme was extremely diverting. One felt at once that here was a woman who would dare anything.

Being black myself the aureate color of her skin struck on my heart like a gong. Her brows and lashes were so pale as to be almost albinous. Above and below a generous, full-lipped mouth her dominant nose contended for supremacy with an obstinate chin. Tanned cheeks spoke plainly of life in the open as did her strong but well-kept hands upon which shone several important emeralds. But what stirred me most were her arms.

Costume makes little or no impression on me. The general effect of what she wore was hard and steely, but gorgeous. The color was mainly white with a great slash of sky-blue introduced somewhere. I had the feeling of being in the presence

of a lady-mayor or an important ambassadress. In any case, her arms were exposed beyond the elbow and to my delight they were generously freckled, not with coarse, country-style, ginger-bread mot-tlings, but with fine, detached discs no bigger than pin heads and pure gold in color. Over these pale paillettes grew the silky fur of which I have spoken. For some reason freckles always excite me, probably because I can never hope to have any except vicariously.

She was playing for high stakes, using only hundred-franc chips and winning with a consistency that attracted the inevitable cortege about her chair, the jackals who try to follow a winner or steal a system by peering over one's shoulder.

I could but admire the coolness with which she turned and pushed away the face of an ornamental Russian woman, the Princess Sonia Subikoff, notorious adventuress and parasite, whose covetous features kept thrusting themselves under the player's elbow. Done by one less sure of herself the action would have provoked a terrific scene. As it was, the outraged Princess, *soi-disant*, struck savagely at the blonde back of the English-woman. The blow resounded as if she had hit a packing-case, producing no more effect than a shrug and a

cheerful grin as *la Subikoff* made off, nursing a lame hand and hissing spiteful comment on the *animal anglaise*. Coolly, superbly, the Anglo-Saxon continued her play, placing her chips with a nonchalant sweep of her great arms. In every movement was the same underlying hint of powerful bony sub-structure.

"*Elle est dure,*" said a voice at my side.

"*Qui ça?*"

"*La belle laide, en face.*"

I turned with an instinctive hostility toward the speaker, his voice, manner . . . everything. To discuss a woman, openly, in a public place. . . . *La belle laide!* . . . and yet, was she not just that? There is a merciless precision in the Latin tongue.

My neighbors were a type I detest,—Peruvians, I judged by the barbarous Spanish clang of their French; sleek, oily, anointed with perfume from their lacquered hair to their equally shining boots, tailored, corsetted, manicured and with that fawning look so unpleasantly suggestive of the oriental. One was playing for small stakes while his companion looked on, but I noticed that both were narrowly watching the English woman and exchanging whispered comments.

Something was in the wind and my submerged sense of suspicion began to stir.

"*Flute!*" cried one of the South-Americans, which is a strong imprecation in French, "She wins like a fiend."

"*Zut,*" replied the other as his last chip passed under the rake.

I turned to my own play, a system which I picked up in Buenos Ayres, a sure winner of small amounts. After two hours I was four and a half francs ahead and the pastime was beginning to bore me. Rising, I saw that the Peruvians had separated, one having crossed to the other side of the table directly back of the English woman while the other loitered near the croupier's desk.

In a flash I divined their plan just in time to act. As the man near the croupier engaged him in conversation I saw the other's hand shoot out and seize a large pile of bank-notes weighted down with a stack of golden louis. I could not possibly reach the fellow or the louis, but I could and did reach the door.

As our paths converged I saw that in his left hand he held an automatic. Acting entirely on instinct I threw in his face a handful of small change, keys, pen-knife, etc., from my trouser pocket. At

the same instant I dove. His bullet roared, harmless, over my head and together we crashed to the marble floor. The thief had never seen a foot-ball game and expected something entirely different.

As we struggled he attempted to turn the weapon on me but my grip was like steel. The room was in an uproar. Hither and yon we threshed about over the polished pavement. In one of our gyrations my foot caught under the teak-wood base of a huge Japanese jar. Fascinated I watched it tremble, totter . . . and fall into a thousand fragments about us. Then the confusion was punctuated by a sharp report and my adversary lay suddenly still. He had shot himself during the struggle, whether by accident or design I can not say.

Rising I looked about and tendered a handful of golden coins and *billets-de-banque* to the tall, masterful woman who stood near me.

"Top-hole," she said, quite simply. "You must come to see me."

She handed me her card, which I accepted, bowing. There were some tedious formalities necessary at the local *poste de police* and it was after midnight when I reached my room and took the card from my pocket. "Lady Sarah Wimpole," I read beneath a simple crest, a swan volant holding

a snake in its beak and the device "*Nunc pro tunc.*"

Our paths had crossed. Matters were coming on apace.

CHAPTER II

Our First Interview

CHAPTER II

“Dr. Traprock?”

She held the card which had preceded me. Saluting in the continental manner, I bent over her extended hand, noting the strong, square nails with their perfect crescent moons at the base.

“Lady Wimpole.”

She motioned me to a complicated wicker chair of Malaysian make which brought back vividly my years in Mindanao.

“You were splendid the other night,” she said. Her voice surprised me. It was harsh, like the note of a grackle or the cry of a sea-bird, full of strange breaks, guttural depths and moving dissonances.

As we talked I took in the details of our surroundings. We were seated in the morning-room of the Villa Bianca, an exquisitely appointed mansion of lemon-yellow stucco embowered in a riot of roses, bougainvilléa and flowering bugloss-vines. From beyond the walls of the formal entrance garden the noises of the town reached us faintly. The

Monocan populace were celebrating the fête of St. Yf whose favor is supposed to bring good luck at the gaming tables.

Glancing at my hostess I re-experienced the conviction that she was a surprising woman. Odd indeed was the contrast she made with her surroundings. The room was of an indescribable daintiness. Overhead arched a pale blue plaster dome upon which painted birds flitted among fleecy clouds or perched upon blossoming branches. The side-walls, except for door and window openings, were covered with coral pink studded regularly with small crystal buttons, the spacing being accentuated by a connecting diaper-design of silver thread.

From the cornice, at the beginning of the dome, hung a deep valance of white lace which was repeated in the long window curtains and innumerable cushions on chairs, *chaise-longue* and footstools. The whole room, in fact, seethed with a sort of suds of lace and *chiffonerie* like an old-fashioned valentine in the midst of which Lady Sarah sat enthroned in a curious chair contrived to represent a sea-shell.

Her costume, as nearly as I could make it out, was a voluminous silk prowler or slip-cover of silk

matching the walls, and like them, edged with lace. An intricate mob-cap covered all but a severe bang of red-brown hair which shrieked at its dainty surroundings as loudly as the green parrot who, raucous and unconfined, swung acrobatically about his perch.

"Shut up, Selim," commanded the bird's mistress; then, having noted my looks of appraisal, "Isn't this place hideous? I hate a room that foams at the mouth. My husband takes it for the season. Poor creature, his taste is ghastly; he was born in Nottingham. This house was built by the government for one of the old king's mistresses. It gives Wimpole a thrill merely to rent it."

She sank back languidly into the recesses of her shell, suppressing a yawn and I could see the faint lines running from the corners of her eyes to the lobes of her ears, lines of disillusionment, of hunger denied, of . . .

During the interval since our meeting at the Casino I had learned something of her tragic story. Born amid the highest and most refined nobility, the daughter of Sir Rupert Alleyne and Mary, Lady Beaverboard, she had seen her ancestral fortune lost by her father in speculative adventures induced by the old taint of the Alleyne madness. In

his fifty-third year Sir Rupert inherited by the laws of succession the estates and titles of the Beaverboard interests, becoming subsequently Duke of Axminster. These honors marked the beginning of the end.

The final crash came with Sir Rupert's attempt to corner the Italian antique market together with all the important trans-atlantic steamship lines, his idea being to completely control the American demand for ancestral portraits and *objets d'art*. The stately halls of Alleynecourt were thronged with continental adventurers freighted down with spurious Botticelli, Allegretti and other masters.

When the Duke, raving, was carted away to Old Drury, his daughter sought refuge with her uncle, Egbert Alleyne, whose scientific works on graptolites and stromatoporoids kept him impoverished and ill-at-ease in a tiny cottage in Gloucestershire.

Here Horace Wimpole found her. He was at that time senior partner in the firm of Wimpole & Tripp, laces, of Nottingham, with a peerage in view and an o'er-vaulting snobbery which he saw prospects of gratifying by an alliance with the penurious but well-connected Sarah Alleyne. On her side it was a bitter bargain,—her youth, her rugged beauty, her hopes of romance in exchange for

wealth and comfort for herself and her crazed sire. She accepted.

A week after the Westminster Gazette announced the bestowal of a title upon Horace, Lord Wimpole, the ennobled merchant led his aristocratic bride from the church portico. Blithely rang the bells of St. George's and lustily rose the cheers of the bluff English onlookers whose worship of nobility and all the panoply thereof is the enduring wonder of the world. Wimpole promptly did his duty by his father-in-law and had the ancient zany removed from Old Drury to a private padded-cell in a fashionable asylum. The old man's last whimsy was that he was Admiral Napier and he was given the run of a small garden where, in full uniform and spy-glass in hand, he made observations and issued authoritative commands.

Lady Wimpole was now free, except for the encumbrance of her low-bred husband who had virtually retired, master of a colossal fortune by means of which he proposed to live up to his new estate.

It was here he made his fatal error. As a business man he was a success, for he ran true to type, but as an aristocrat he was a hopeless false-alarm. Contrary to previous statements, in matters of breeding kind hearts can not compare with coro-

LORD HORACE WIMPOLE

"As a business man he was a success, for he ran true to type,
but as an aristocrat he was a hopeless false-alarm."



Lord Horace Wimpole

nets, particularly when the latter have been in the family for ten generations.

Finding himself a failure in the fields of sport, riding to or from the hounds, cricket and the active exercises, intellectually unable to compete in cultural pursuits such as the writing of memoirs or the collecting of sea shells and butterflies, Wimpole was thrown back on the last recourse of affluent ignorance, travel and dissipation.

In the latter field he showed a natural aptitude which, had it been caught and cultivated in some previous generation, might have made him a rather attractive rake. But it came too late; he was merely beastly. Lady Wimpole was quite frank about it.

"Your husband,—is he with you?" I asked.

She raised her beautiful pinkish eye-lids toward the ceiling. "Still asleep . . . he was unusually crooked last night. You know he has taken up the vices. He tries to be brutal."

"Does he beat you?" I put the question frankly because I knew it was the traditional thing and I felt that she would appreciate a direct method.

"No," she said simply. "He would like to but he doesn't dare. He does his worst however. He bites."

She slipped back the soft sleeve of her gown and extended an arm. I shrank back in horror. The dog! A semi-circle of teeth-marks marred the salmon-silkiness of the loveliest fore-arm in the world.

Involuntarily I paled and yet felt curiously relieved. This proof of dastardly conduct on her husband's part seemed to make easier the thing I knew I should eventually have to do, namely, take this gorgeous creature from him.

Turning toward the parrot to hide my emotion I said "Madame,—I am sorry to bring you bad news . . . but we are both summoned to appear before the local police magistrate the day after tomorrow. The charge is murder. You are a material witness. The affair is entirely technical, but there are unseen influences at work. The young man,—the scoundrel who attempted to steal your gold, was well-connected, of an old Peruvian family. They have cabled representations to the Monacan government. The whole affair has the look of a nasty, political embroglio. It may last some time. I was once called as a witness to a trolley accident in Jerusalem and six months afterward . . . "

"I will hear all that later. Today is Tuesday.

Call for me Thursday morning—what is the hour? eleven? Good—be here at ten-thirty: I will not fail you. Adios.”

Again saluting her *à la française*, I departed.

For two days I carried her image in my heart. I know not how it is with others but when I have once decided to love a certain person I find it a simple matter to do so. At the first glimpse of Lady Wimpole my heart, had, so to speak, assumed a crouching posture. It only remained for me to tell my emotions what to do, just as I might direct my great police dog, Graustein, to stop a suspicious character. By now I was thoroughly aroused. The memory of those atrocious teeth marks and that blemished fore-arm were fresh fuel.

At exactly ten-thirty on the appointed Thursday I approached the villa. It was close shuttered and wore a vacant, deserted look at which my heart sank. The gate was locked and the bell jangled noisily among deserted rose bushes.

“Curses!” I ground out between clenched teeth. “She was toying with me!”

A step on the gravel interrupted my bitter reflections. It was the old gardener.

"*Madame est partie,*" he announced, "*et Monsieur aussi . . . sur le yacht . . . ce matin.*"

A glance toward the bay confirmed his statement; the slim white shape of Wimpole's yacht, the Undine, was no longer in sight.

"But did they leave no message?" I demanded.

He turned aside smiling.

"*Un mot? Sais pas . . . c'est-à-dire . . . peut-être . . .*"

I saw what he was driving at. Damn the bak-sheesh hunting tribes!

"Here," I said, thrusting a crisp bank-note through the bars. Seizing it he fumbled in his blouse and produced a large envelope which I clutched eagerly, tearing it open as the bearer disappeared into the depths of the garden. Beneath the now familiar crest, in a bold masculine handwriting, I read the simple words, "Meet me in the desert, S. W."

This thwarting of my desire, this baffling of my purpose—was the one thing needed to set my blood on fire. On the instant I turned and ran down the hill toward the water-side, all thought of Monacan courts-of-law completely forgotten. At the precise moment when the stately judge-advocate in his purple and green *laetitia* or official robe

opened the Monacan Court, the little Kawa was slipping over the Southern horizon toward the African mountain wall beyond which lie the limitless sands of the Sahara.

"Meet me in the desert," she had said. No desert on earth could be big enough to hide her. My emotions were up, and in full cry!

CHAPTER III

Into the Great Unknown

CHAPTER III

Africa! Far away I sighted the purple shadow of the land of mystery, the low-lying coast-line and interior wall of mountains behind which lay the vastness of Sahara.

We struck the coast at Djidjelli, further East than we had anticipated. Captain Triplett, my navigator, said that compasses always acted queerly in these waters which he ascribed to the influence of occult desert powers, outraged divinities and the like.

"It's them genuses," he said, "they raise hell with yer."

Be that as it may we had to veer sharply in order to make Algiers on the third day after clearing from and out of Monte Carlo. The harbor showed no trace of the Undine and according to the port-authorities she had not touched there, nor was there any record of the Wimpole party at the leading hotels or travel bureaus. They were gone.

swallowed up in the immense folds of the silent, brooding Southland.

"Meet me in the desert!" Lady Sarah's parting cry rang in my ears. In it I detected the first note of appeal suggesting her growing need of me, a need of which she was perhaps still unconscious, but which might grow to who knows what. Why was I so certain she referred to Sahara, the Great Desert? I can not say, but it seemed inevitable that she would choose the largest; it was in keeping with the majestic, monumental nature of the woman. Whatever the reason I was positive that somewhere in those uncharted wastes I should find her. Facing them, as I stood on the quarter-deck with Whinney, my acting-first-officer, I pressed Lady Wimpole's letter in my breast pocket and whispered softly "I come, my lady of the desert, I come."

"How?" said Whinney.

"Nothing." I answered shortly and went below.

Another certainty, arrived at during my trans-Mediterranean trip, loomed large in my plans. Re-visiting the desert after an absence of ten years I decided that I should assume my title of Sheik of the Moplah Bedouins which had been con-

ferred upon me in recognition of having saved a native caravan from certain death due to the sudden failure of the wells at the Oasis of Sus.

Since that memorable time the Sheik, as an institution, has acquired a tremendous sentimental and romantic value which fell in admirably with my quest of the remarkable English-woman who had yanked me so forcibly from the spiritual doldrums.

Tunis, Algiers, Fez and Agadir, all the important North African towns—now do a thriving business in Sheik-outfitting, the bazaars ringing with the cries of costumers, burnous-boys, veiled Circassian beauties with their trays of turbans, dealers in arms and accoutrement, saddle-sellers and camel merchants. But I needed none of this shoddy material designed entirely for the tourist trade. What I wanted was the real thing.

Two days after my arrival in Algiers I stumbled on Ab-Domen Allah, the faithful dragoman who had dragged me through Turkey and Arabia in 1902. It was sheer Traprock luck, for he was the very man I wanted, capable, resourceful and devoted.

Over a glass of coffee on the terrace of the Di Baccho I explained my needs.

"*Si, si,*" he hissed, patting his huge bulk delightedly. "I understand. I will attend to everything. See, we had best do thus and so."

Dipping his fore-finger in the coffee he drew an excellent likeness of Africa on the tablecloth.

"We will enter here at Rascora on the very western edge of the desert. You can go round by water: I will meet you there with the camels. Thus we will go through the desert the long way. You will miss nothing. You are looking for something, eh?"

I hesitated, but he burst out laughing.

"A woman! Aha, my friend. You have not changed since I met you in Skutari! You devil!"

Drawing back from the table in order to give himself room to shake he trembled like a mountain of jelly until a glance at his wrist-watch told him it was the evening hour for worship. He could not kneel but turned his chair toward Mecca and performed the orthodox calisthenics in a sketchy but satisfactory manner.

Personally I was more than willing to let him have his laugh in exchange for having secured his services. Matters of detail could now be dismissed. At dawn the next day I weighed anchor for Tangier and points west, slipping rapidly down

the Moroccan coast with short stops at Mogador, Rio de Oro and, finally, Rascora.

Rapid though the trip was it took the better part of a fortnight allowing Ab-Domen no more than time to assemble our caravan. During the interval I took up the re-study of the desert languages, Berber, Arabic, Bedouin and the main Sudanese dialects all of which I had fairly well mastered before we rounded the gleaming cliffs of Cape Blanco. I also gave considerable time to exercising myself in the florid style of speech without which no Sheik is really a Sheik. During these periods of study I would stand near the capstan and apostrophize my lost lady in the most poetic terms.

“O thou! beautiful as the dawn and rounded as the bursting lotus-bud whose voice is as the cooing of a dove calling gently to its mate, lo, from afar I come to thee.”

These proceedings astonished the crew. In fact I overheard Captain Triplett say to Whinney, “The old man is cuckoo,” to which the flippant first-officer replied, “You gushed a geyser.” I had to reprimand them both severely.

Another exercise to which I devoted considerable time was the practising of that stern, aloof mien which is the proper Sheik-ish attitude. This

was very hard for me for my nature is genial. However no one ever heard of anyone clapping one of these portentous Arabs on the shoulder with a "Hello, Sheik; how's tricks." That sort of thing would mean death according to modern literary standards and I endeavored to convey this idea to my companions whenever they were familiar which was always. I almost precipitated a row when I said one day to Whinney, "Peace, thou ill-begotten son of a base-born mule-driver" . . . He seized a belaying pin with the light of mayhem in his eyes and I had great difficulty in explaining the purely figurative meaning of my words.

In private, however, I continued the practise of speeches redolent of the great eastern orators who are pastmasters of the art of saying it with flowers, while I also steeled my heart to a cruelty toward all woman-kind which is an absolute prerequisite of successful Sheik-ery. Often, in the privacy of my cabin, I would seize my rolled-up steamer rug by the throat and cry harshly "So, I have you at last, have I? Remember, woman, you are mine! . . . all mine."

As may be imagined these studies filled in the time admirably and made me mad with longing for the actual desert voyage to begin.

Two days after dropping anchor Ab-Domen appeared on the outskirts of Rascora winding his way down from the Atlean foot-hills, bells tinkling, flutes playing and camels smelling. He had assembled a complete outfit equipped with everything for an indefinite stay in the desert.

I had decided on camels as our motive power for I loathe such modern contraptions as motorboats in Venice and motor-trucks in the desert. I couldn't quite fancy myself as a Sheik arriving on a truck and crying "Lo! it is I, the son of the Eagle." Besides I would probably get my burnous caught in the fly-wheel which would be a pity as it was really magnificent, a true Moplah Sheik costume, pure white with a number of tricky gold ornaments.

Ab-Domen had done a gorgeous job in selecting my camels. During his shopping he had been accompanied by my friend Herman Swank, for many years my super-cargo. We stood together as the herd wound its way into the village under its own power and Swank gave me some interesting information on their fine points.

Qualifications to be considered in buying a camel are water-and-weight capacity, hair-crop and stupidity. The first consideration is how

many miles per gallon can the beast do. Curiously, just as with automobiles, dealers invariably lie about this point.

Weight-capacity is tested by loading the camel until he can't get up and then removing small amounts until he *just* can, thus giving the traffic all that it can possibly bear.

The hair-crop of the camel is one of the staple harvests of the desert area and is of tremendous value for the local manufacture of ropes, shawls, blankets, etc., and for the export trade in camels-hair brushes, used the world over by water-color artists. Water colors are, of course, out of the question in the Sahara where there is very little color and almost no water.

Stupidity, the last named attribute, is an essential in a good camel. Fortunately most of them possess it to an amazing degree. Without it no animal would think of entering the desert let alone carrying the crushing burdens which are imposed upon them. Ab-Domen had combed the country for stupid camels, among which the bactrian booby-prize went to DeLong, my own mount. Whinney bestrode Rufus, a reddish beast while Swank called his Clotilde in memory of a young woman he had known in the Latin

Quarter. They were all single humped Arabians which are superior to the Asiatic variety, just why I can't say. After having ridden them a week it seemed impossible that they could be superior to anything.

We left Triplett at Rascora whence he was to take the Kawa round to Cairo. I allowed six months for our trans-African trek. Two days after his departure we faced the East in the conventional caravan formation, led by an ass, the emblem of good-luck. Our number had been increased by approximately sixty nomads of my own tribe, the Moplahs, a number of minor-Sheiks and a rabble of desert folk, Walatu-s, Gogo-s and Humda-s. To these must be added the *doolahs* or black camel-boys who closed the file while Ab-Domen, on a powerful camel, held a roving commission, darting hither and yon, or to and fro as needed.

Our first objective was the Oasis of Arag-Wan. For several days we passed through tiny desert villages, Uskeft, Shinghit, Tejigia and others. There was no trace of the Wimpoles, but in this I was not disappointed. It would have been humiliating to find her too quickly, to stumble upon my lady on the first day out, to say "Oh, *there*

AB-DOMEN ALLAH

Dr. Traprock's faithful Dragoman who, as the author says, "literally dragged" him through the desert.

you are!" and to have the whole episode over. I felt sure that our meeting would be more dramatic.

On the fourth day we faced the empty desert. Never had I felt more completely a Sheik. My friends Swank and Whinney had caught my enthusiasm as well as my mode of dress and address.

"Hail, El-Swanko!" I would say; "Son of the well-known morn and illustrious evening-star, may thy blessings be as the hairs on thy camel's head and thy bed as soft as his padded hoof."

"Back at you, Dhobel-dhub, Sheik of the Moplah Chapter," my friend would cry, being a bit unpracticed in the fine points of sheik-talk. But he came on rapidly and was soon able to converse fluently in the ornate hyperbole of the country.

The desert and the ocean have been frequently compared but happenings of the next few days were to bring this comparison home in no uncertain terms. Swank and Whinney suffered acutely from their first experience on camel-back and even I felt somewhat uneasy until I became accustomed to DeLong's pitch and roll. The "ship-of-the-desert" is no idle poeticism.

Beyond Tejigja we were completely out of sight of water. No trace of passing craft broke

the horizon about us. Like an admiral at the head of his fleet I scanned the sky anxiously. Three days passed. On the fourth a violent head wind forced us to tack in order to keep the sand out of our eyes.

The next morning I rose to face a titanic struggle between earth and sky. The desert was rising. After a three-mile advance I gave the order to heave-to. The camels were anchored fore-and-aft, to long tent-pegs. The sand became increasingly fluid. Low ripples running over its face rapidly rose to waves which dashed their stinging spray over us with the rasping hiss of a devil's hot breath. In the lulls I could hear the wails of the *doolahs* and the bubbling roar of the camels.

Ab-Domen fought with the resource and bravery of a great commander. We were now all crouching low against the blast.

Suddenly I saw Ab-Domen point excitedly toward the East. A gigantic tidal-wave of sand was bearing down upon us through the murk. Of what followed I can only give a dim impression. I heard the parting of several anchor ropes and the screams of the anguished beasts as they and their riders were swept into oblivion. Then,

as if to administer the *coup-de-grace*, two enormous sand-spouts loomed up from the south, hideous spinning wraiths, whirling dervishes of the desert, personifying all the diabolic malevolence of this ghastly land. One missed us, passing within a few yards of DeLong and myself; the other moved directly across the compact mass of *doolahs* who lay screaming in its path. I had a glimpse of a score of black bodies sucked upward into the swirling column, spinning helplessly in the vortex with arms and legs out-thrust, grasping or kicking at the empty air. Then all was dark.

.

Five hours later I dug myself out of suffocation and sand. The storm had passed. Twelve *doolahs* and two camels were missing. The rest were badly disorganized. But the desert lay, calm and peaceful about us. We had weathered the storm and, to my infinite joy, there, in the distance, the white walls and bending palms of an oasis gleamed in the evening sunlight—the wells of Arag-Wan. We had won through!

CHAPTER IV

The Wandering Wimples

CHAPTER IV

Still no trace of the Wimpoles. I was up early and out betimes. We had pitched our tents and rested our caravan in the shadow of the palms of Arag-Wan. Here our water-skins, canteens, camels and other containers were filled to overflowing. A trace of French thrift surprised me. The wells had been fenced off and equipped with a red Bowser-pump guarded by a half-cast Berber in brown cloak and battered visor-cap bearing the legend "*Colonies d'Afrique.*" There was free-air but not free-water.

"*Combien de gallons?*" asked the old chap.

"Fill 'em up," I ordered, knowing that the next station was hundreds of miles to the eastward.

During the filling process I wandered out into the desert. The air was cool and delicious. A soft breeze whispered through the palm-trees in the branches of which chattered a lavender *tabit* or doctor-bird. Beyond the edge of oasis the low-

AT THE OASIS OF ARAG-WAN

Herman Swank, Traprock's intrepid follower, superintending the important process of filling the camels.



At the Oasis of Arag-Wan

growing palmettos, oleanders and gun-sandarachs dwindled to stunted prickly pears and leprous leaved squill-vines among which I noted the fresh tracks of several audad and a jerboa.

Intensely interested as I am in the secrets of nature's book I became completely absorbed in the perusal of this fascinating page, or perhaps I should say foot-note. Bending over the imprinted tracks in silent study I became aware of a soft tread on the sand back of me. I turned my head silently but though I made the motion with the greatest caution it was enough to stampede a flock of seven magnificent whiffle-hens, birds of the utmost rarity, a cross between the ostrich and the bustard.

They were off at once, loping across the desert with that supremely easy and deceptive swing of their slightly bowed legs, traveling at a gait which breaks the heart of the swiftest horse, their snowy plumes gleaming in the sunshine. But what brought me up all standing was the fact that the leader of the flock sported in the center of his tail-feathers a gorgeous ostrich plume which very evidently did not belong there. For it was bright blue!

On the instant I recognized it as the ornament

worn by Lady Wimpole at the Casino in Monte Carlo!

A second later I was rushing pell-mell back to camp to rouse Ab-Domen and make preparations for pursuing the rapidly vanishing whiffle-hens.

Fortunately my faithful dragoman had had the foresight to include in the caravan a number of fleet Arabian steeds for just this sort of sudden foray or side-excursion. I selected Whinney as my companion and we were soon mounted in the deep, Moroccan saddles, bits and bridles jingling with bells, burnouses flapping and long guns projecting at dangerous angles. The animals were frantic to be off, rearing, snorting, glaring with blood-shot eyes and blowing foam over the grooms who clung on madly like hounds at a fox's throat until I gave the word "*Marasa!*"—"Cast off!"

Off we flew like arrows. It would have been more impressive had we both gone in the same direction. As it was the effect was somewhat scattered and it was ten minutes before Whinney and I re-convened two miles from the encampment and were able to lay a course in the supposed direction of the birds. Our brutes had now calmed down but were still mettlesome and we seemed to fly over the sandy floor, eagerly scanning the

horizon. Fortune favored us. The flock had stopped to feed among some low-growing ground-aloes and we came on them suddenly in a fold of the plain.

Reining up I motioned Whinney to move with caution. We must rouse but not frighten them if we hoped to keep within range. Cupping my hands I gave a close approximation of the cry of the African whimbrell, a small but savage bird which is the bane of the whiffle-hen whom it pesters by sudden, unexpected attacks. The flock moved on at once looking about and paying no attention to us as long as we remained at a distance.

Thus we proceeded for the better part of the morning. The sun's heat was becoming dangerous. According to all laws of desert travel we should have been safely sheltered in our tents but I kept on obstinately. My theory was this; whiffle-hens, owing to the value of their plumage, are often caught, corralled and domesticated as is the ostrich. That this was the case with the birds we were following was evident from the presence among them of Lady Wimpole's blue feather. They might well have been part of her caravan, have broken bounds and launched out for them-

selves. On then, ever on! Fortune favors the obstinate!

As if to corroborate my thought, things began to happen. The whiffle-hens suddenly stopped in their tracks and stood peering forward. By moving to one side I noticed what their mass had concealed, namely a few palm trees and tents at no great distance, the occupants of which had apparently seen the birds approaching. To one side was a temporary corral, its gate invitingly open.

Sensing the psychological moment I gave the word to Whinney and with a loud cry we sped forward. The whiffle-hens caught by this unexpected onslaught dashed onward, instinctively rushing into their old quarters outside of which we drew rein, to be praised, congratulated and wondered at by the desert patriarch who had given up his precious creatures as lost. Bending low he ground his face in the earth, raising his head only to blow out small clouds of sand—for he was of that odd sect, the *Ismilli* or sand-blowers—mixed with a volley of laudatory expletives.

It was unmistakably the Wimpoles' caravan. Hampers, hold-alls, English-tents and impedimenta were everywhere in evidence.

"Where are they, the Lords of your destiny?" I questioned.

The old hen-shepherd blew out a final cloudlet of sand.

"Yonder is their dwelling: the silken tent neath the third palm. They are but just now risen."

Dismounting and throwing my reins to the native I strode off in the direction indicated. As I drew near the tent I paused.

Voices were raised in altercation. Far be it from me to be eaves-dropper to a private family-quarrel, which, alas, I feared was an all too frequent occurrence in the lives of this mismated pair. Ready to withdraw I hesitated when a particularly sharp interchange forced a decision. A burst of laughter was followed by a man's voice crying hoarsely—"By God, I'll cut your throat!" Then a shriek rang out. It was high time to interfere. A fight may be private but a murder is not. Drawing aside the curtain I leapt into the tent.

"Hold!" I cried. "Stay thy hand: infidel son of a swineherd's sister; or by the beard of the Prophet thou perish'st."

The speech was entirely impromptu and I thought it sounded well, but somehow it fell flat.

Lord Wimpole was alone. He was shaving.

"I was speakin' to that dam' parrot," he said brandishing his razor toward Selim who was twisting about and making a noise like sick automobile-gears. "Who are you, may I ask?"

How low the fellow was! . . . and how contemptible he looked, his face half shaved, half lumpy with lather. One of life's bitter jokes is that practically every man must shave. As I thus philosophized the curtains of an adjoining apartment opened and She appeared.

Heavens! how beautiful she looked. She *en dishabille*, clutching about her golden body the folds of a dazzling silk kimono, purple shot with green. Her hair was down: being bobbed it was, of course, always down, and her blue eyes were filmy with sleep.

"Doctor . . ." she began.

I checked her with an imperious gesture in which was expressed the boundless freedom of the fiery Arab race.

"El Sheik Abdullah-el-Dhub ak Moplah," I announced.

Lord Wimpole was plainly impressed. Hastily finishing his left cheek he extended his hand.

"'Oly mackerel . . . a real Sheik. Put'er there. I'm a lord meself."

Ignoring his effusion I spoke solemnly.

"Leagues have I ridden, I and my faithful follower, tracing the flight of birds, yea, even of the swift-skimming whiffle-hens, which ever drew nearer to their home even as my falcon-heart drew nearer to its nest, the tent of the most beautiful."

I glanced at Lady Sarah who never batted an eye though one lovely lid drooped ever so slightly. Continuing I said, in part.

"And now, the journey done, I am a-weary and would fain repose myself in the light of the gazelle's eyes. My charger rests neath the nodding fig-tree and my soul is parched and a-thirst."

This was a craftily contrived bit. Wimpole gaped through most of it but got the final word.

"Thirst" . . . he cried. "Gad, I should say so. Me too. Jolly good idea."

A moment later, her ladyship having retired, Wimpole, Whinney and I raised tall beakers of superb Scotch to my heartfelt toast, "the loveliest lady in the world."

Would she hear me? I wondered. A husky voice from behind the curtain answered my hope:

"Lads, pass one in to me."

CHAPTER V

Love and Lions

CHAPTER V

The afternoon, it appeared, was to be given over to a lion hunt in spite of the objections of Effendi-Bazam, the *Karawan bashi* or leader of the Wimpole party which, by the way, was as ill-organized and amateur an outfit as I have ever seen. We were now not far from the southern edge of the Ahaggar Plateau which thrusts its spurs into the desert like the stony fingers of a giant hand clutching at the sands. The ravines between the fingers were an ideal lurking place for desert lions, mangy, ill-favored beasts but far more sporty than their South African brothers.

Effendi-Bazam was an undersized ottoman, hardly higher than a foot-stool. He was thoroughly desert-broken but as timorous as a hare.

"Great danger!" he cried, pointing northward when the hunting expedition was proposed. "Great danger."

"Danger from what . . . the lions?" I asked.

A DESERT DIANA

"The afternoon, it appeared, was to be given over to lion-hunting."



A Desert Diana

He shook his head and I saw a convulsive swallow traverse the length of his triplicate chins. Then he motioned me aside, out of ear-shot of the others.

"Not lions," he whispered, "but worse . . . a madder, wilder beast. O, listen, I pray, important Sheik-el Dhub, listen and heed. We are in the land of Azad,—Azad the Terrible. In yonder defiles he lurks and who so ventures there-in is defiled."

I should mention in passing that there was no suspicion of a pun in Effendi's original statement which was delivered in the Astrachan dialect: the horrid thing is unavoidable in an honest translation.

"Azad!" he continued,—"you have heard of him? Murder, blood, rapine . . . they are but beads on his rosary. O, magnificent Moplah, I fear for our lives . . . for our lady. *Ai! Ai!*"

He lay grovelling at my feet.

"Rise, Effendi," I ordered. "Due caution will be exercised."

Without understanding my words he departed, comforted.

Azad! small wonder that at the mention of his name my face had assumed its sternest, cruellest

expression, for it is a name which is almost unspeakable in the mouth of any self-respecting desert denizen. In every story of the desert which I have studied there is one Sheik who is described as the cruellest man in the world. To put the matter arithmetically, these men added together equal one-half of Azad. That is how wicked he was.

He was said to be the son of a Spanish murderer who, having escaped from the *bastilliano* at Cadiz, lived for a time with a gypsy woman of unknown origin. Azad was the result. From his earliest years he was an outlaw and defy-er of authority. Swaggering, brawling, killing, making love, he roamed from one Mediterranean port to another, gathering about him a following of riff-raff and ne'er-do-wells. Then came his notorious abduction of Miss Sedley from the mission station at Fez. This outrage assumed international proportions. Our government, after a sharp interchange of notes with France, proposed a punitive expedition. Two months later President Felix Faure was assassinated. Then rumors began to leak out that Miss Sedley did not wish to be rescued and the affair was dropped.

From that time the name of Azad became a

synonym for unbridled license. Many a time I have heard the fishermen along the Moroccan coast say, as the thunder rolled among the coast-ranges. "Aha; there is old Azad, laughing at the law!"

If we were near Azad we were near violence, that was certain, but you may be sure I said nothing of this to the others since there was naught to be gained by alarming them. I had another and better plan. I must divert them from their proposed expedition into the hills.

About four in the afternoon when the sun was beginning to lose its violence the horses were saddled and the gun-bearers gathered under the palm trees, Effendi meanwhile becoming more and more anxious.

"Milady," I said, addressing Lady Sarah who had just come out of her dressing tent, "have you ever hunted desert lions before?"

"Only yesterday," she replied, "but we'd no luck. Not so much as a whisker did we see."

"We didn't go far enough," put in Lord Wim-pole. "Effendi stuck about the edges of the hills."

"Curious . . ." I mused, "that you saw no lions . . . for there are plenty of them there . . . and yet . . ."

"Wot are you drivin' at?" blustered Wimpole. "Wouldn't we of seen 'em if they'd been there?"

This was just what I wanted.

"Not necessarily," then, as if the thought had just occurred to me. "By jove; this is an ideal place for netting lions!"

Both Lord and Lady Wimpole were instantly intrigued.

"What ho?" they cried simultaneously.

"Here is the idea," I explained. "Over there is typical lion country, nothing there but sand and lions. But you can't see them; nature takes care of that, you know, protective coloration. Tawny, yellowish beasts—they're invisible at ten feet. But they can be caught. How many camels have you?"

"Twenty-two" supplied Effendi.

"Good. Take all the nets that go over their loads and fasten them together. Quick."

"Do as the Sheik says," said Lord Wimpole.

An hour later we were ready, the camel nets in a huge ball being rolled easily over the desert. About three miles distant I had noted a rocky flume which narrowed at its lower end. It was ideal for my purpose. Spreading the nets below I ran a strong camels-hair rope through the outer

edges making a gathering string which was then carried up and over the projecting rock. At my direction a score or more of *doolahs* began prodding the high bank of sand that rose between the rock-walls of the gorge. First in a slow trickle, then in a steady stream the sand slid down into the nets. Occasionally a large mass would fall in which I thought I detected a flurried motion but, from our distance, I could not be sure. When the sand had piled itself to a height of about twelve feet, the base of the symmetrical cone reaching to the edge of the nets I gave a word of command, "Now!" and the *doolah*-boys began pulling hastily at the gathering rope. The edge of the nets rose neatly, closing in around the top of the cone. Phase one of my operation was complete.

Next came the final and exciting step of freeing the nets of sand. This was accomplished by yawning the gathering-rope violently from side to side until the net was sufficiently loosened to allow its being dragged across the desert floor. Twice, thrice the sturdy *doolahs* hurled their bulks on the rope.

"She starts . . . she moves!" shouted Whinney.

Once in motion, the sand spun rapidly through the meshes until it was reduced to a small mass in the center of which I could detect two vague, but furiously revolving forms . . . lions!

"Spearmen, ready!" I commanded, for it does not do to be unprepared.

Lord Wimpole, express-rifle in hand, was apoplectic with excitement.

"Do we shoot 'em?" he cried.

"No . . . no!" I motioned him back. "They will kill each other."

Sure enough, after a few moments' fearful clawing and growling the fierce struggle amid the strong meshes quieted down. Two precautionary shots into the net, and the battle was over. At our feet lay the mangled remains of two tawny lions, exactly matching the shade of the surrounding sand.

"For milady's boudoir." I said quietly. "In my own country we do it with a sieve; it is much simpler."

" 'Straordinary!" said Lady Wimpole giving me a meaning look from her brilliant eyes, and we made our way back toward the camp voting the affair a complete success.

.

We dined in state in the Wimpoles' dining tent. It was a lucullan repast of European delicacies varied with African dishes superbly cooked by a French chef; hors d'œuvres, a delicious thin soup, audad steak and Egyptian quail succeeded each other, each course being marked by its appropriate wine from sherry through the whites and reds to cognac.

"Couldn't bring any champagne"; apologized Lord Wimpole through a mouthful of quail, "tried to but it blew up. No ice in the dam' desert?"

Lady Sarah looked on coldly as her husband passed through the familiar phrases of garrulity, incoherence and speechlessness. She rose disdainfully just as his lordship slipped heavily from his camp chair. "May I speak to your ladyship a moment . . . alone." I murmured.

She nodded.

"Effendi, remove his lordship."

I followed her out under the cool stars, whispering to Whinney as I passed, "Get the horses ready, we must away."

At the edge of the oasis Lady Sarah paused and faced me. We were alone—at last! Overhead a million eyes looked down from the twinkling gallery of heaven; far to the west a gibbous moon

shone palely; night enveloped us—in fact it was going on midnight. Clearing my throat I began.

“O woman, strange and mysterious, lamp of my life, it is not for me to rend the veil of thy secrecy, but my soul is eager in its questioning and my heart cries for an answer. Tell me, if thou so will’st, why did’st thou fly from thy nest when thou had’st made tryst with me at the police-station?”

To my delight she caught the elevation of my style at once and replied unhesitatingly.

“Listen, O desert-man, Sheik Adullah-el-Dhub, and let thy heart attend, for oft has my own voice upbraided me that I did thus walk out on thee. Know then that it was not my will but that of the Sheik Wimpole, my over-lord, that hurried me hither-ward.”

Though I winced at the reference to her over-lord I could but admire her fluent mastery of the nomadic tongue.

“He it was,” she continued, “who plucked me from thy side, fearing the long delays of the law. But thou gottest my message?”

“Yea, Princess—” I answered, at which she smiled, pleased evidently, at the promotion,—“Yea, even so,—and thy signal plume likewise. ’Twas

well contrived the matter of the whiffle-hens. Trust thy woman's wit."

"'Twas simple," she answered. "They were in the keeping of Kashgi, the sand-blower, an ancient stupid. Under guise of petting the bell hen I affixed my feather. Something told me they would find you, O Great South-wind."

Her words moved me deeply.

"Straight as the thrown lance or the sped arrow," I cried, feeling that the moment for tender mastery had come, "so came thy harbinger to me, O woman of bronze and gold. Allah be praised, whose hand hath guided me since that first fair evening when at the ocean's edge I marvelled at thy sky-line!"

She looked down at me, for she was slightly taller than I—tenderly, her rugged contours softened and beautified in the silver light. It was like moonlight on a cliff. My heart pounded furiously—her presence, the silence of the desert . . . the cognac . . . I was fired by emotion. Drawing myself up to her full height I stretched out my arms.

"O, Woman——"

On the instant I paused, thunderstruck. Far away on the northern horizon a light gleamed for a moment and was gone. Was it fact or fancy that made me think I saw a vague shape in the shadows

ALONE AT LAST

"I was fired by emotion. Drawing myself up to her full height
I stretched out my arms.
'O, woman'"



Alone at Last

before me. Instantly the thought of Azad flashed through my mind and brought me to my senses.

"Lady Sarah," I said hurriedly—"I must defer what I was going to say until another time. I was forgetting what made me ask for this interview—the night—your beauty—but the point is this. You, we, all of us are in imminent danger. On the hills yonder lies the camp of Azad the Terrible!"

I could see her pale in the moonlight.

"Even now his spies are probably prowling about, watching your camp, counting your men, your camels, your—women."

"What would you suggest?" she asked tremulously.

"Flight—" I replied boldly.

Her glance expressed both surprise and disappointment.

"Yes," I repeated harshly, "flight! I have never been afraid to be cautious. Listen, Lady Sarah. Your caravan is ill-equipped. Effendi is strong on commissary but weak on munitions. There is but one thing to be done. We must consolidate. Azad will not attack tonight; he knows I am here. At dawn strike camp and remove to the Southward. In the meantime I will speed to my own men and

summon them to your assistance. There is not a moment to be lost."

Hastily retracing our steps we reached the camp where, at the portal of the luxurious tent, I bent over Lady Sarah's hand, lightly brushing her firm knuckles with my lips.

"Farewell," I breathed. "Remember, strike camp at dawn. Be of good heart—and do not forget—the Sheik Abdullah-el-Dhub."

"How could I?" she whispered, smiling strangely.

As she lifted the tent curtain I had a glimpse of the elaborate interior, hung with silken draperies and furnished with many-hued cushions and a broad low divan over the edge of which, upside down, hung the brutish face of Sir Horace Wimpole.

"Her over-lord!"——

Ugh! A shudder of revulsion shook me.

A moment later Whinney and I were rushing through the night like great white birds while in my heart echoed the words of an old Persian love song—

"Farewell, farewell, my sweet gazelle,
With ruby eyes——"

CHAPTER VI

A Desperate Predicament

CHAPTER VI

Whinney and I were facing a difficult task, a hard ride at night just when we should have been going to bed. This meant little to me for I have frequently gone two and three nights without sleep but it was torture to my companion who is that most pathetic of human beings, a creature of regular habits. Twice, as we plodded along, he lunged from his saddle and as I lifted him he kept murmuring "Must have my eight hours . . . must have my eight hours." All efforts to keep him awake were in vain and I began to despair of ever reaching our destination until I hit on the idea of fastening my burnous between our horses forming a cradle into which my friend fell with a pleased smile and the drowsy comment "Make up lower seven!"

On, on we sped at a smooth, steady pace. Now and again the horses would separate to avoid a thorny squill-bush and Whinney would be tossed

REGINALD WHINNEY

"That most pathetic of human beings, a creature of regular habits."



Reginald Whinney

lightly in his blanket; but he slept soundly through it all.

I was glad to be alone, alone with my fears, my anxieties and my great love, for that Lady Sarah felt the force of my flaming passion I could not doubt. Had she not called me to her side? Had she not looked into my eyes that very evening with an expression which might have led me to the gates of Paradise, had I not been interrupted by Azad's signal flash?

Azad! The thought of him was a knife in my heart. "On, Thunderer, on." I urged my willing horse, patting his wet neck and shoulder. Then moved by a sentimental desire for a confidant I leaned forward. The brute seemed to understand for he bent back an attentive ear. "It is for her!" I whispered. Thunderer whirled instantly and Whinney was thrown far into the night.

"Not *to* her . . . *for* her, you idiot!" I ground out, savagely tugging at the reins and forcing my brace of beasts back toward our passenger. But though we were soon under way again the horses were now restive and difficult to manage.

I had been steering a course by the stars, aiming at a particularly large, red one which looked familiar and which, Whinney agreed, had been

directly over our camp. But there must have been something wrong with my calculations. Most Sheiks steer entirely by the heavenly bodies but I had hardly had time to get the hang of them.

The sky was fading to a delicate beryl-green when I decided to let the horses have their own way. As I loosed my rein they turned gracefully at a right angle and broke into an encouraging gallop. Soon the heavens were flooded with the invading light, the stars paled and the sun's rays shot across the desert. With the sun just peering over the horizon every stunted shrub cast a long blue shadow, every shallow depression became a pool of liquid purple into which Thunderer and his fellow rushed, loose-reined.

We must have ridden a dozen miles out of our way following the red star line and I was beginning to wonder if the intelligence of the Arab horses was all that it was said to be, when I detected a distant something on the horizon. It was still too far off for identification but I scanned it eagerly. A quarter hour passed and I could clearly make out an oasis and beneath it tents—our tents!

"Time to get up," I yelled, bringing the two horses close together, thus squeezing Whinney's

head gently between their bellies, causing him to open his eyes in astonishment.

"There we are," I shouted. "Get up, man; climb into your saddle."

He clumsily obeyed my injunction and having freed my burnous, I gave Thunderer his head and dashed forward, glad to be temporarily rid of my sleepy companion. As I flashed by I had a glimpse of Whinney checking his horse and stopping to wipe the sleep from his eyes. Little did I realize it at the time but my leaving him at that moment was to be one of the determining events of my life, an event without which that life would inevitably have been lost and this story, horrible to think of!—never written.

Thunderer and I covered the last quarter mile in record time, jumped a series of tent-ropes and recumbent camels and bounded into the center of a somnolent compound.

"To arms! To arms!" I shouted, brandishing my own. "Your queen is in danger." Unconsciously I quoted the beautiful lines from the *Black Crook*, probably the most exquisite lyric drama in the English language. At my words startled Arabs popped from the encircling tents or raised themselves from the masses of baggage upon which they

had been sleeping. In a moment I was closely hemmed in by a circle of swart, savage faces. "Heavens," I thought, "how could Ab-Domen have recruited such tough travelling companions?"

Then, raising my hands, I addressed them, speaking boldly, fiercely, talking down to them as it were in order to let them know their place.

"Hearken, O, Scum of the Sahara, and hear the words of your master, Abdallah-el-Dhub. . . ."

A roar of laughter and a mighty cry of "Yaa . . . a . . . ah" greeted my ears and with a sickening sense of defeat I realized that I was surrounded by enemies. I might have known! The men were of a different type from any of my camp-followers. My Arabs were swart but these were swarter. I instinctively looked over their heads to warn Whinney of my predicament.

"Back," I shouted. "Back,—I am captured."

But I might have saved my breath. The plucky fellow was already a speck on the horizon having fled the instant he saw and heard what was transpiring. There was only one desperate chance left; to jump the encircling crowd. Spurring Thunder with both heels, I gave him a loose rein. Gathering himself together he made a glorious leap from a standing position high over the head of the tallest

Arab. For a second I thought I had broken through when, straight and sure, rose a native spear hurled by a gigantic Bassikunu. It struck my courageous beast directly below me and with a scream of anguish he fell on the stout shaft, the point being forced upward through bone, sinew, entrails, saddle-blanket and saddle. Only the greatest nimbleness on my part saved me from a fatal puncture.

Like a soaring bird I leaped from the saddle, my burnous floating in billows about me as I planed earthward there to be seized by a hundred hands, disarmed, my hands trussed behind me, my feet bound in morocco leather and my head covered with a filthy gunny-sack.

About me I heard coarse laughter and an occasional remark in the crude Bassikunu dialect.

"Hah!" said one, kicking me contemptuously, "this will be a pleasant surprise for Azad."

So? I was in *his* hands. O, the bitterness of my reflection that Azad, the cruellest of men, held me thus in his power, and that far from having captured me I, Traprock, had deliberately ridden into his arms. The humiliation, the ignominy of it. By a desperate movement I managed to struggle to my feet.

Bound as I was, with my head covered I must have presented the appearance of a contestant in some grotesque gymkhana event. After a few convulsive leaps I fell heavily, landing in the live embers of the cook's fire over which hung a kettle of some nauseous brew which I promptly upset in my spasmodic efforts to escape the burning brands; all this to the accompaniment of uproarious laughter.

Rolling over in one final wriggle I felt something hard under my hands back of me. My grasp tightened on it by instinct as I lost consciousness from faintness and suffocation. I knew vaguely that I was being lifted by two men after which I was thrown down heavily; then blackness closed about me. Matters were not looking their best.

.

My first impressions of Azad were gained from his voice. He had returned to his camp during my fainting spell and stood not far from the spot where I had been thrown.

"Well, did you get the women?" asked one of his followers.

"No," he said. "By her side was a mighty Sheik—a Moplah—so my spy tells me, a man of great

strength and cunning. I resolved to bide my time. Tonight she will be alone with her half-witted husband and her idiot of a Karawan-bashi and—

“You say a Moplah chief was with her?” questioned an unfortunate follower who had not learned the penalty of speaking out of turn in a conversation with Azad; “why this very day . . .”

He got no further. Azad gave an almost inaudible command at which the interrupting voice suddenly thinned to a wheeze as if the wind-pipe had been closed by violent pressure. A convulsive gurgling sob was followed by a low moan and I felt the impact of a body falling heavily on the sand near me.

Though I could see nothing I must confess that Azad’s voice was the most unpleasant I have ever heard. Far from being harsh and dominating it was low, cool, almost tired. It faded away at the end of sentences as if the possessor had withdrawn himself from human contact. I sensed the presence of one to whom human life, even his own—was nothing. If a snake had a voice I feel sure it would be the voice of Azad.

“What was the fellow saying?” asked those icy tones.

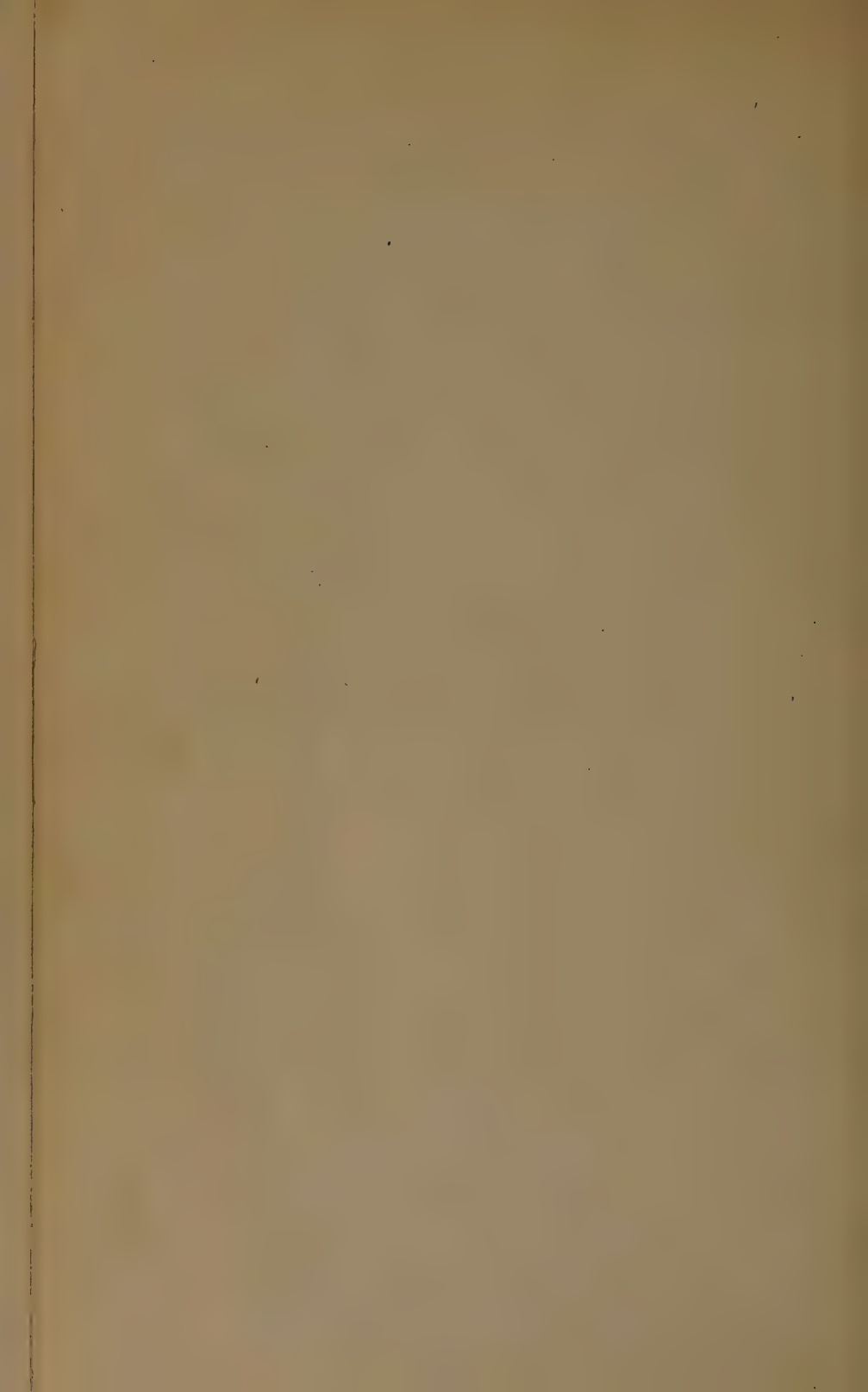
“That we have this day captured a Moplah chief,

AZAD THE TERRIBLE

"If a snake had a voice I feel sure it would be the voice of Azad."



Azad the Terrible



O Sire," was the humble reply, "even now he lies nearby in the shelter of thy tent where he awaits thy pleasure."

"Produce," said Azad.

I was lifted and borne into a brighter light. An instant later the sack was pulled from my head. It was a critical moment; now, if ever, was the time for dissimulation. I must pretend that my fainting fit still endured; upon that depended my life. Even a man as unspeakably cruel as Azad finds no satisfaction in torturing an unconscious enemy. There is no pleasure in it.

I was not mistaken. After a brief inspecting during which I scarcely breathed I was again flung into the shadows.

"Let him wait," said the voice of Azad,—“when he comes to we will . . .”

I can not repeat his proposed line of action but the mere mention of it nearly produced a real swoon.

For an hour I lay motionless, thinking, thinking, the thought drumming in my brain,—“How should I get out of this mess?” About me the sounds of the camp gradually quieted. The heat grew intense and I knew that it was the middle of the day, the time of the siesta. And then again I became

conscious of the object which I had clutched when I was first thrown on the ground. Turning it over in my bound hands I realized that it was a knife, evidently one of the cook's utensils which I had knocked over. To cut the bonds back of me was difficult but I finally managed it by lying on the edge of the knife. One by one I felt the thongs part though I injured myself severely in the process for as each strand of leather gave way the blade sank in my flesh and the sand was reddened about me.

Faint but desperate I realized that I must act quickly in the brief interval offered to me. Freeing my feet I cautiously lifted my burlap veil and peered about. I lay near the entrance of Azad's tent in the recesses of which I could see his body sunk in deep slumber, guarded by a drowsy slave. Just beyond the outer curtain lay the form of a humble Bassikumu, the unfortunate creature who had interrupted his lord and master. The hem of his dirty brown mantle almost touched that of my burnous.

An open attempt to escape now meant certain death. For one mad moment I thought of springing to my feet, cleaver in hand, and dispatching the filthy Azad with one clean blow. But what was to

be gained. The odds were too great. Slowly a plan formed in my mind.

With the silence of a snake I edged slightly nearer the slain Bassikunu until our garments overlapped. It was the work of an hour which seemed like twelve for me to move his corpse out of his coarse garment and into the voluminous folds of my cloak. Moving a fraction of an inch at a time, the sweat of excitement pouring from my body, I burrowed and pushed and pulled and hauled until we had at last changed places, the humble camel-driver lying inside in my Moplah cloak while I sprawled beyond the tent wall in his blood stained and ignoble raiment. A few feet from me on the sand lay his tongue, plucked out by the roots, a pretty sample of Azad's work.

Scarcely had I effected this perilous change of costume when the camp was suddenly in an uproar. Into the midst of the compound bounded an excited Arab on a foam flecked horse. Azad leaped to alertness with amazing speed.

"Speak, Mulai Hadji," he commanded.

"Their caravan approaches!" said the rider excitedly. For a second I cherished the thought that my own men were on the way to my rescue but this hope died as the speaker continued, "even now

they are moving southward,—their camels rich with plunder, their men few and ill-armed.”

“What of the Moplah caravan?” asked Azad who was evidently a man of caution rather than bravery. I hung on the answer in a fever of excitement for I knew it referred to my own expedition. The information was delivered with a scornful laugh.

“The fools! They continue Eastward in search of their lost master. A day’s journey away they must be nearing the Wells of Tabala. The fruit is ripe, O Mighty Azad; the golden pomegranate is ready for your plucking.”

The golden pomegranate! That could be none other than Sarah, my lovely bird, flying southward at my behest, straight into the clutches of this vulture, this . . . it was too much. Leaping to my feet I ran toward the camel-compound. Happily, in my humble costume, I was unnoticed; I was simply a Bassikunu, one more or less. Seizing and mounting the first available camel I joined the mob which was surging northward. My one hope was to detach myself from this filthy band, overtake my own men and bring them back to the rescue. Cruel as it seemed to desert Lady Sarah at this juncture therein lay the only practical plan. But on a slow

moving camel my task was hopeless. Ahead of me rode one of the sub-sheiks on a magnificent sorrel mare. What must be done must be done quickly. For an instant he checked his horse to avoid a tent-rope and in that instant I acted, urging my clumsy brute forward and riding off the Arab, pushing him with all my force against the obstruction until horse and rider fell sprawling. Dropping from my camel I was at his side in a second, pretending to assist him, in doing which I twisted his head completely around so that though his breast lay upward his face was buried in the sand. He fainted without a sound and a moment later, wrapped in his great cloak, I sprang into the empty saddle and, cautiously at first and finally at full speed, rushed off toward the east.

The whole operation took no more than three seconds and could never have been accomplished other than by taking advantage of the peculiar conditions of confusion, etc., and by acting upon what has always been my greatest safeguard—instinct.

CHAPTER VII

The Escape

CHAPTER VII

Free! Free once more. With a glorious feeling of elation I bounded off across the desert. Glancing over my shoulder I saw that I had accomplished my get-away without attracting attention. Azad's men were streaming steadily northward, a low cloud of dust marking their progress. I watched intently for any sign of pursuit but none came. From the unfortunate tribesman who had ridden my mount I feared no further trouble. The strength of my hands is a constant surprise to me and when I twisted the fellow's head I had heard something crack with the ominous, final snap of a too-tightly wound toy. Unless I was very much mistaken the creature was permanently out of order.

My hours of unconsciousness and captivity must have been longer than I realized for I noted that the day was far spent. This was a source of comfort to me for hope sprang in my breast that the

sun would disappear before the treacherous scoundrel I had evaded could come up with the Wimpole caravan. Unconsciously I encouraged the orb of day in his descent, urging him with prayers and curses to sink as rapidly as possible. Sheltered by night the cortege of my lady might yet pass a few hours in safety, hours fraught with fiendish anxiety for me.

My plans for the future hung on a gossamer thread of chance, that of locating the Wells of Tabala to which, according to Azad's informant, my faithful Moplabs had repaired. My only indication was the vague one of direction. The wells lay to the eastward and eastward the star of Trap-rock took its way, blindly, desperately. Pray Heaven my men would go slowly and cautiously as they might well do considering my absence.

After an hour's hard riding when all traces of the enemy had faded into nothingness I paused and from an inner pocket drew out my map of the Sahara. As I feared it was too small in scale to be of definite advantage. Imaginary lines such as the Tropic of Cancer, the 20th Parallel and numerous meridians were shown with perfect distinctness. These would have served admirably had I been going to an imaginary place but the Wells of

Tabala were of poignantly definite import and of them there was no trace. With a sigh of resignation I thrust the document back in its case and took up the reins.

These first leagues of my journey were by no means as uneventful as they sound. The reader must remember that my horse and I were utter strangers to each other. This the mare resented with all the fire of the most pure-blooded Arabian steed than which no animal is more difficult when aroused. With true feminine deceptiveness she concealed her feeling for a considerable period during which we gathered tremendous speed. Then suddenly, after a great leap in air, she landed stiff-legged, stock-still in a cloud of sand. Fortunately I had taken care to twist the Bassikunu cloak firmly about the pommel of the saddle or all had been lost. As it was I flew straight on over the animal's head, fetching up with a snap and swinging downward violently at her feet. She immediately reared, endeavoring to kill me with her sharp hoofs. I now hung like a human apron under her foaming muzzle, her eyes luckily being blinded by the heavy folds. In a trice I threw my arms about the thrashing knees, and, quickly slipping my grip down to the fetlocks, crossed her fore-legs,

throwing my full strength against her shoulder as she fell. With a whimper of defeat the gallant beast rolled over on her side while I sat comfortably on her head and regained my breath, thanking my stars for the years of experience on our western plains which now stood me in such good stead.

Then, unwrapping the burnous, I looked long and steadily into the bloodshot eyes of the animal below me. Gradually the wild gaze softened until with a sigh of resignation the soft lids dropped and the tense neck relaxed. As plainly as a horse could the mare said "I surrender; you are my master."

I instantly rose, taking the animal at her word and she stood peacefully still while I tightened the girths. From then on there was no more trouble from that quarter.

If we had travelled fast before we now fairly flew. The sorrel swung steadily on as if to make amends for her past captiousness. By this time the sun was below the horizon and purple shadows vast and threatening rose from the wastes about me, vague towers and impalpable wraiths of darkness that loomed and fled. The low voice of the night wind began its sobbing. Often there would come to my ear the sound of a broken, inarticulate sentence as if some inhuman tongue had babbled a

mysterious language: again the gray shape of a jackal glided swiftly along the edge of my vision or a desert rat scuttled across my path. As the darkness deepened it became peopled with all manner of visionary terrors and I could readily understand and accept the myriad djinns, evil spirits and ghosts of the misty East.

An hour later, as my heart sank lower, the sorrel suddenly checked her stride, faltered and came to a full stop. "Poor brute," I thought, "you are spent. It is the beginning of the end." But as if to contradict me she thrust out her nose and neighed shrilly, following this by a cautious advance. Plainly she had detected something of which I was not aware. Sure enough, a hundred yards farther on I caught the sound of low moaning, pitiful but inexpressibly human and comforting in that dark wilderness. We made our way quickly in the direction of the sound and were soon rewarded by seeing a vague black form against the desert grayness. Hastily dismounting I bent over the object.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Pity . . . pity . ." begged a weak voice.

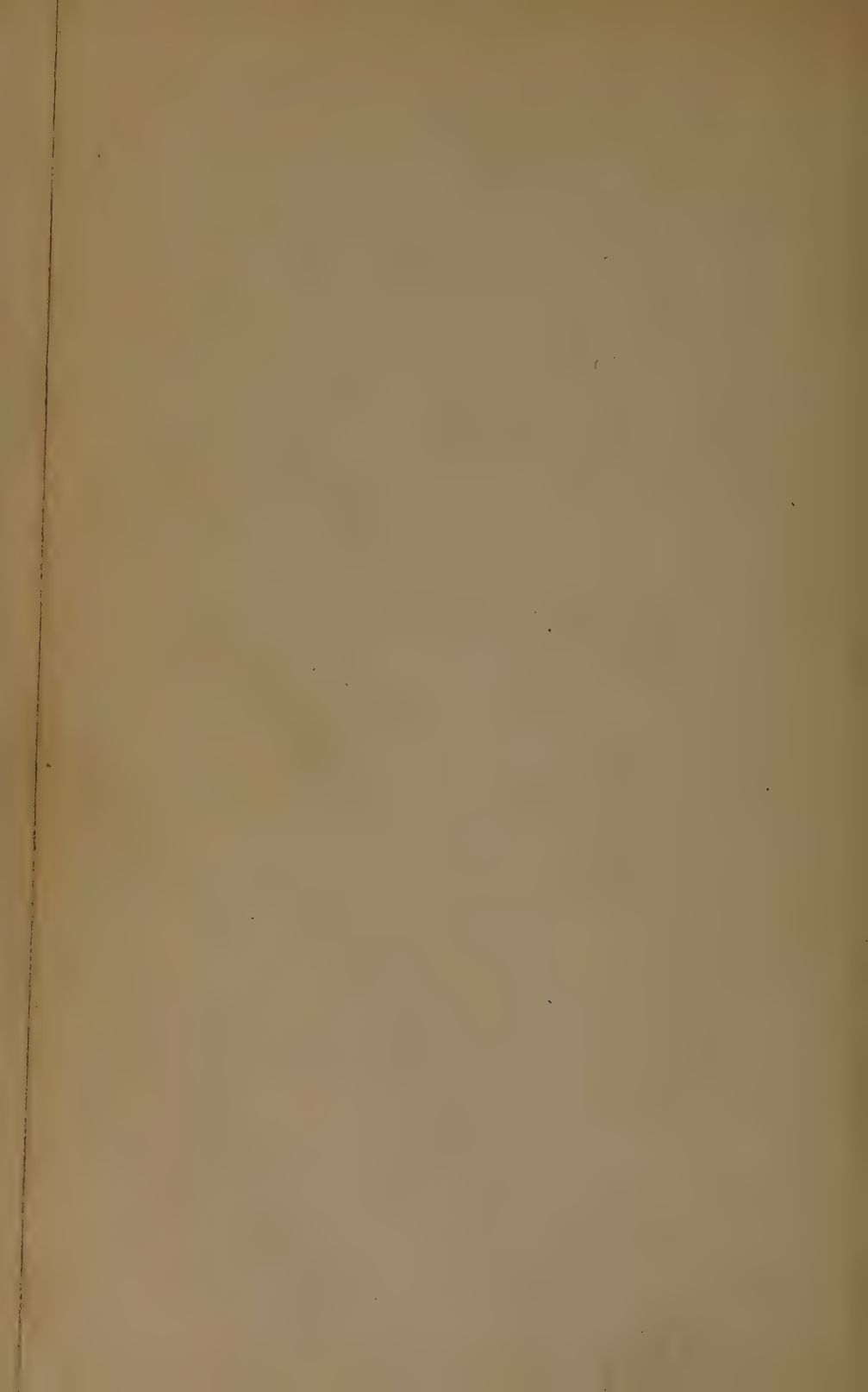
Bending lower I saw that the speaker was a woman, young and beautiful, her pale features haggard to the point of exhaustion. When I had

ZALOOFA

"She was a Circassian, lured from the convent-school of snake-charmers at Timbuctoo."



Zuloaga



given her a reviving draught from my emergency flask and assured her of my friendly attitude she outlined her pitiful story. It was another sample of Azad's dastardly work. She was a Circassian, lured from the Convent-school of snake-charmers at Timbuctoo. For a month she had been the sheik's favorite, then cast aside, poisoned as he thought and left to bleach on the sands. But her constant inoculation with the venom of her pets had made her practically immune to the deadly toxin and for three days she had lain helpless 'neath the furious sun, struggling to reach Tabala.

"Tabala!" At the word I sprang up. "Whither?" I cried. "Tell me quickly. I go but to procure aid."

"'Tis not far," she murmured. "An hour's ride, perhaps, under yon constellation of El Whizbang." And with the words she lapsed into unconsciousness. Covering her gently with my cloak I leaped into the saddle. Bright above me glistened the starry diadem of El Whizbang and once more the sorrel and I thundered on through the night, our hearts alight with courage and hope.

The desert woman's direction was straight and sure. With startling suddenness a group of tall palms sprang into being. The neighing of my

excited mare roused muffled cries, movement, bustle and confusion as vague tents disgorged their startled inmates. "Swank! Whinney, Ab-Do-men!" I shouted.

Answering shouts of "Traprock" pierced the night.

There was no time lost in parley. A brief pause for rest, a change of costume, a fresh mount and with twenty picked men armed to the teeth I turned back over a road I was not likely to forget.

"Westward-ho!" I shouted, heading the gallant troop, and we thundered off to the rescue of all that I held most dear.

CHAPTER VIII

Sheik to Sheik

CHAPTER VIII

In the short interval at our camp I had given Ab-Domen explicit orders as to just what to do. Twenty of the best tribesmen and all the available horses came with me. The men were mostly Moplabs with a few Kadas. They had long roamed the desert and having had much experience with tourists, were as rapacious and blood-thirsty a lot as one could wish. In addition I had Swank and Whinney, trusted and true, with the exact amount of intelligence necessary to handle the turbulent natives and no more.

Ab-Domen stayed with the caravan. His instructions were to retrace his steps with the outfit which was, of course, slow moving. He was to make one day's journey after which he was to pitch camp and be prepared to welcome us back or dig in and resist to the death should Allah so will. My parting with the ponderous dragoman had been unusually affecting and it was with a stern, set countenance that I headed my impetuous band.

For some time we rode in silence. The vault of heaven was still black at the zenith but at its eastern edge glowed a widening band of silver that flickered and ran fitfully about the horizon as the flame runs around the wick of an oil stove. I never light my four-cylinder blue-flame without thinking of that momentous hour. Back of us the star, El Whizbang, sank to its usual matinal extinction, a faithful and exemplary planet, having performed its good deed for the night. We soon reached the crouching form of the Circassian woman with whom I left supplies, a loaf of bread, a goatskin of camels-milk and several of the latest magazines and whose location I marked for Ab-Domen's guidance with a small red flag mounted on a spear. Thus we left her, looking like the eighteenth green -- of a desert golf course.

In the growing light the trained eyes of my Moplahs easily followed the vague tracks of my previous ride. No wind had risen to disturb the shifting sands and though invisible to me their practised vision easily picked up the trail. They were much puzzled when we reached the site of my struggle with the sorrel where the deep hoof marks and trampled sand were plain to all. "You fell?" asked Ouidja, a cadaverous Kada. I laughed at

the idea and shortly narrated the incident to their great delight, and ejaculations of "*Bishmillah!*" "*Biskra!*" and "*Wahully!*"

Day now streamed lucidly over the undulating plain but though the tension of the previous hours was somewhat relaxed by action the increasing light brought to me an increase of anxiety. By now Azad's camp would be astir. At this very moment the attack might be beginning if—alas! it had not already ended. This despairful thought prompted an attempt on my part to shorten the distance between us.

Between our present position and the original site of Azad's camp lay an hour's hard riding. From that point he had gone north while my course had been east. We had been describing two sides of a right angle. Obviously the intelligent thing to do was to close the triangle and take the shortest possible route along its hypotenuse. "Halt!" I ordered.

Hastily dismounting I drew an accurate diagram on the desert, which is ideally adapted for geometric study. All my life long I have clung to the knowledge that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. It stood me in good stead now. Quickly

THE RESCUE

"Superb! you are like a swift-running tide-race foaming over a hidden reef."



The Rescue

figuring the approximate distance which Azad and I must have travelled I leaped into the saddle with a cry of "Q.E.D." to the mystification of my followers. From now on I was leader indeed. According to my figures and time allowance the distance to be travelled should be about nineteen miles which, with our superb animals, we could expect to travel in a little more than an hour. "Pray Heaven Euclid was right," I murmured.

The sun had cleared the horizon and struck brightly on our flowing cloaks.

"You are a wonderful sight!" cried Swank, who had ridden off at a distance to take a photograph. "Superb! You are like a swift-running tide-race foaming over a hidden reef!"

But I was oblivious to his poetic similes for, far off but dead ahead, I seemed to see an answering gleam of white and a faint dusty blur on the horizon. My heart stood still as my horse bounded forward more swiftly than ever.

"On!" I shouted hoarsely. The others caught the infection of my excitement and we thundered onward.

Yes! . . . it was Azad and his assassins!

After an interminable half-hour we could see them plainly. The attack was on in all its fury. Very

evidently Azad's men had seen our approach, even as we had detected them, and had thrown themselves on their quarry with the idea of having that part of the job done with before we could come up. But they had reckoned without the intelligence and courage of Lady Wimpole and the brute obstinacy of her husband. Wimpole, it appeared later, the instant he suspected the hostile intentions of Azad's party, had formed his group into a British square which he considered absolutely unbreakable.

We could see the huddled formation in the center with the encircling cordon of Bassikunus galloping about it. The sight of a merry-go-round invariably brings back that tragic picture. Soon we heard the fierce cries of "*Blida! Laghouat blida!*" a Bassikunu form of unprintable torture which clearly accounted for the desperate resistance of Effendi and his men. Poor Effendi! I had feared he would give up at the first shot, but I did him an injustice.

Now we were only a half-mile away but O, what dire things can happen in a half-mile. How I cursed the desert for its magnificent distances as I urged my horse forward. An occasional shot, a scream, an imprecation now mingled with the rising

dust. At intervals twos and threes of the attacking party broke from the circle, darted forward and plucked some screeching fragment from the human wall. A camel dashed by me, bellowing piteously, the upper third of his hump cut cleanly off by some terrific sabre-swing which gave him the singular look of a table topped mountain. Brick by brick, stone by stone, life by life, the living parapet was being torn away.

Now in the center I could see the little group of defenders, smoking revolvers in hand, Effendi-Bazam crouching low, praying and firing simultaneously, Lord Wimpole, white as paper, Lady Sarah—my Sarah! redder than ever; a flaming beacon of courage, her bottle-green veil flying behind her and her eyes snapping behind her dark-blue glasses. Horrors! The square had crumbled! —the wall was down.

With a loud cry of "*Blida!*" the desert-scum rose like a tidal wave overcoming the gallant group in a final heart-rending crash. A cloud of dust, pierced by wails of agony, obscured the ghastly details of the picture.

At times like this one does not think clearly; one acts. It was so in this instance. Without a word being spoken Swank and Whinney ranged them-

selves on either side of me, my Moplabs forming a dense triangle at our backs. The enemy had instantly whirled about presenting everywhere a front bristling with guns, lances and gleaming *simlas*—the long, curved desert-swords. With increasing speed we hurled ourselves at the mass. Representing as I did what efficiency experts call the “point of contact” my position was one of extreme danger.

Let me but dispose of the first man! He was a gigantic fellow with a gun approximately twelve feet long pointed directly at me. As he pressed his finger to the trigger my automatic barked and he crumpled up with a blue-edged hole in his forehead. The next instant our crushing wedge split Azad’s warriors into fragments. In that first moment of terrific impact Swank and Whinney stood by me nobly. Only men trained in the rush-hour tactics of civilized subways could have come through alive.

With the first penetration accomplished it was a case of hand to hand fighting. Everywhere were struggling knots of humanity, swaying, plunging, stabbing slicing . . . it was hell let loose. A single thought in mind, I searched frantically for Lady Sarah. She was nowhere to be seen. Weaving my way between sprawling groups I fought toward the

edge of the battle. Then I saw the devilish Azad's scheme, for at a distance of a hundred yards were two horsemen, a muffled figure between them, galloping furiously to the southward. Crafty villain! under cover of the fighting his idea was to escape.

Free of all obstacles I sped after them, rapidly gaining on their encumbered progress. It was two to one but what cared I. Seeing themselves overtaken they reined up while Azad's bodyguard took deliberate aim through the sights of his long gun. I could almost feel its cold muzzle on my brow. But they had reckoned without the power of the woman they carried. With a convulsive spring she threw herself about the marksman and his bullet whistled over my head; a second later he fell pierced by the last ball from my automatic which I flung into the sand. In a flash I was alongside.

"Azad," I shrieked—"your hour has come!"

His usually calm face was twisted with evil passion, not unmixed with terror. Without the help of his henchmen the weight of the English woman had been too much for him and I saw her huddled body slip from his grasp and fall heavily to the sands. He pulled savagely at his beast's mouth with the evident intention of backing and trampling

SHEIK TO SHEIK

"Azad," I shrieked,—“your hour has come——”



Sheik to Sheik

her to death. But at that second I resorted to an old Moplah trick which is the pride of our tribe.

At a distance of ten feet I pointed the muzzle of my gun into the sand and using it as a vaulting pole described an arc in the air. Even so I should have been severely if not fatally wounded for the low-lived creature was alertly awaiting my descent to meet me with an inescapable blow of his razor edged *simla* . . . I say "inescapable" for who can dodge in the air? But wait . . . At the very second when by all the laws of gravitation I should fall against the sweeping blade, at the very instant when the wiry desert pirate delivered what he meant should be my death blow . . . I pressed the trigger of my gun and fired it into the sand. The recoil of these Arab weapons is enormous. For an appreciable time my flight was not only arrested but reversed.

Bird-like I leaped lightly clear of the whirring blade only to fall with a crash on the baffled nomad's head, enveloping him in my burnous under the folds of which I dragged him to the ground.

It was now a Sheik to Sheik contest; in-fighting of the most inward character.

Fighting in a burnous is very much like fighting under the bed clothes, a pastime in which I had

often indulged during my school-boy days. Moreover I was master of numerous grips and holds which are not in the Arab vocabulary. But Azad was at grips with death and knew it; in addition I felt sure that he still had his pistol which, if he could but press it against my side, would be unfortunate.

His wiry strength surprised me. He constantly slipped from my grasp. It was like fighting a basket of eels in a clothes-hamper. Hither and yon we thrashed. Once I got a grip on his Adam's apple and thought to have wrenched it from his throat but his teeth closed on my ear lobe and I loosened my hold. Now I heard the thud of horses' hoofs, footsteps and approaching voices.

"Club him! Club him!" shouted some one.

But the rescuing party were in a dilemma. They could not tell which of the struggling forms to club. Resolved not to let go of my enemy, with my brain reeling and the blood pounding in my temples I decided on a desperate expedient.

"Club us both," I shouted with my last ounce of breath.

A heavy blow sounded and the figure in my arms relaxed. Before I could cry "Hold!" a second blow fell. A white light blazed before my eyes and I knew no more.

CHAPTER IX

Mine at Last!

CHAPTER IX

They told me afterward that I lay unconscious, hovering twixt life and death, for four days. On the fifth my temperature rose and I was seized by a delirium in which I babbled of early days, my boyhood in Derby, travels, dangers, women . . . I know not all I said. But paramount in my thoughts was Lady Sarah whose name I called at intervals. Prior to coming up with Azad's men I had not slept for seventy-two hours. I had ridden scores of miles, been wounded a dozen times and suffered from the keenest anxiety. The final blow on the head, added for good measure, had been the death of one less virile. But my will-to-live won out.

On the fifth day I slowly opened my eyes and gazed, mystified at the vision above me. It was Lady Sarah's face but through my filmy pupils it loomed vague and indefinite like the harvest moon in a fog. Then my vision cleared.

"You?" I questioned.

She smiled and placed a finger on her lips with the familiar nurse's gesture.

"Sh . . . you must not talk." She wore the conventional nursing costume in which all women look well. As she turned to busy herself professionally with a tray of medicine bottles a mounting tide of color suffused her cheeks spreading to the ears and neck until they were a rich mahogany. Blessed creature! She too had suffered during her vigil. At the thought I had an absurd vision of one of Giorgione's red angels bending over me. A weak laugh faltered on my lips. She was at my side in an instant, bottle in hand.

"Time for meddy . . . then go bye-bye."

She poured out a moderate portion of something potent and pre-war. I sank back with a sigh of satisfaction. How good she was to me! and how gentle! . . . "Meddy" "Bye-bye" "Good-night, Nurse." I was asleep.

.

How delightful are convalescent days. The mind is so keen and every stage of improvement brings such a thrill of adventure from the first bit of solid food to sitting up, being read to, talking

and the bliss of the first cigarette. Then later came visits from friends, dainties sent in and the gradual putting-together of the past. Flowers, too—a vase of purple bugloss-blossoms from Effendi-Bazam. He too had been struck down and barely rescued just as two Bassikuni were about to carry out their threat of *laghouat blida*. I wept like a child at his tenderness.

Lord Wimpole's tent had been turned into a sick room while he occupied mine. I do not think he liked the arrangement but Lady Sarah had taken these matters into her own hands. Little by little the story was told me, of how my men had turned the tide of battle and annihilated all but a handful of Azad's forces who had fled into the desert. Seeing my grievous state a messenger was sent to Ab-Domen which resulted in the consolidation of the two caravans.

"How fortunate you arrived just when you did!" exclaimed Lady Sarah one evening, clasping her knees in her long bony hands. "Another second would have been too late!"

"Nonsense," blustered Lord Wimpole pulling his stubby moustache, "we should 'ave stood 'em off. You can't break a British Square y'know."

"My eye," said his wife coldly, flicking a cigarette

ash in his direction. "They were all over us and you know it."

Wimpole mooned out of the tent while I was telling his lady of my fortunate application of the "pons asinorum."

"What is that?" she queried. "My French is atrocious."

"An old geometric theorem; the bridge of asses over which every school donkey must pass."

"And you did!" she enthused. "How clearly it brings home the advantage of a college education."

Thus we passed long hours in tender confidence during which I told her many things, she listening for the most part, as I recounted my life from its infancy, with a nursery anecdote here and there, some droll saying or madcap prank which I played on Miss Stafford, my first teacher. No detail seemed too slight to interest this wonderful creature to whom I vowed to bare my whole existence. Step by step I worked my way through infancy to adolescence, boyish sports, my skill at mumblety-peg, my first affair with Norah Flaherty who worked in the melodeon factory . . .

It was at the close of this tender incident that she bent over me late one evening to tuck me in, her rose-rimmed eyes glowing into mine. Involun-

tarily my arm encircled her gaunt framework drawing her down, close . . . close. Thus she knelt by my cot for a long moment before she rose with an effort at self mastery.

"I think you can get up tomorrow," she murmured, and the curtains swished softly on the night air.

"What happened to Azad?" I asked one day.

Whinney, who was visiting me, flicked an ash from his cigarette.

"Your men claimed him after he came to. They buried him, Moplah style, you know?"

"Rather!"

I could see the wretched creature hands and feet bound, planted up to his neck in hard packed sand. The eyes invariably went first, toothsome morsels for the vultures,—then came the ants and flies.

"We kept him alive as long as we could," said my friend, "occasionally that Circassian girl used to go out and sprinkle salt and sand on his sore spots."

"That will be all for today," I remarked, for I was still weak.

It was a matter of ten days before I began to feel my full strength and resilience returning, days of short walks and long rests in a shaded *chaise-longue*. Whinney and Swank had laid out an ex-

cellent nine-hole golf course where I was soon able to join them. Golf in the desert is a simple affair, the course being entirely of sand one needs but two clubs, a driver and a niblick. It is like playing in a gigantic bunker and my game soon came back to me. Then there were afternoons of gazelle and gecko hunting with sloughi-hounds, the only dogs which can stand the peculiar conditions of the desert for which nature has equipped them with bushy, protective eye-brows, short beards and curiously splay-toed feet which give them great speed over soft sand. Another pastime of our leisure hours was the Arab's favorite pursuit of hawking.

No standard Sheik travels without his hawk or hawks, hung in gay cages from their pack camels and the women folk are constantly busy knitting hoods for the poor creatures who spend so much of their time blindfolded. The reason for this constant blindfolding I had never fully understood until Ab-Domen explained it. The theory is that a hawk's eye is only capable of just so much looking and it would therefore be supremely unwise to let him wear his eyes out in the contemplation of useless objects such as people and camels. Now, however, was the hawks' holiday and the air was specked with the graceful creatures careering at

dizzy heights like motes in a sunbeam. They are recalled by a whistle which they obey with the marvellous intelligence of a day laborer at the noon hour, dropping whatever work they may be engaged in to settle quietly on their masters' wrists.

An exception to this statement must be made in the case of a hawk in pursuit of an *opapa*, a desert fowl closely akin to the Australian carpenter-bird which it resembles in its hammer-head, saw-bill and long, nail-like claws. Many a morning in the Cowba district (East of Sydney) I have been awakened by the building operations of these creatures whose nests are solidly framed of gum-wood which is later stuccoed with a mixture of bird-lime and feathers. But I digress. . . .

The *opapa* of which I started to speak is for some reason unknown to ornithology the deadly enemy of the hawk and once sighted is the object of a relentless attack. Seated one day in the encampment I witnessed a grewsome battle between two of these implacable rivals of the air. The recall had been sounded, but the hawk paid no attention to it. His one thought was the complete annihilation of his antagonist which he accomplished by repeated attacks, closing-in, ripping-off tender strips of flesh and actually devouring the entire carcass save

the saw-bill, bony hammer-head and nails; in other words, the hawk, in mid-air ate the artisan and dropped only the tools, after which he returned peaceably to his master.

But our position in the camp was becoming increasingly difficult. Our water supply had been thrice replenished from the Tabala station which was at an inconvenient distance. Moreover the guardian of the wells began to protest against our frequent calls. "Caravans come and caravans depart, but you are repeaters," he said in effect. My strength now was completely restored; under my folding burnous I could feel the steel contours of hardening biceps, triceps and forceps. Will-power, ambition, the old love of adventure were again in the ascendant.

Now arose a difficulty which was destined to result in vital consequences. I refer to the division of responsibility between Lord Wimpole and myself. Here were two caravans each with an acknowledged leader. During my illness the supreme command had fallen in the Englishman's hands. Incompetent though he was he could not bring himself to relinquish it. Temporary power had gone to the little lace-maker's head and the inevitable battle of wills began. The first open break

occurred during a discussion as to future plans. Wimpole was all for a continuation of the life of ease and luxury which so well suited him. His absurd suggestion was an immediate removal to Tabala with an indefinite stay there. My decision was to push on to the beckoning East according to my original plans. In vain we argued. "Very well, we split," said his lordship, his brow like thunder, his lower lip protruding like a camel's.

The thought of leaving Lady Sarah was unbearable. Nevertheless with a heavy heart I resolved on the sacrifice, ordering Ab-Domen to make preparations for our departure. But an incident occurred which modified this laudable design.

Wimpole, since his re-establishment in his own tent, had reverted to his old manner of brawling domesticity. Sounds of strife resounded nightly from their quarters, the grumbling of his heavy voice, rising to imprecation, the crash of china and an occasional cry of protest from his unfortunate wife. Nevertheless, as far as I knew, he had not resorted to open violence. Pained and apprehensive I continued my preparations. Daily the *doolahs* trotted to and fro busily loading the camel-packs and striking all but the necessary tents. The eve of our separation arrived.

TWIN BEDOUINS OF THE EAST

Traprock and Whinney constantly on guard against possible surprise.



Twin Bedouins of the East

The Wimpoles gave a dinner in their luxurious dining-tent. I sat on Lady Sarah's right, her husband being at the other end of the table. It was a mournful feast. My heart was too full for food but I quaffed the succession of vintage wines with reckless abandon. Our last evening together! At the thought my hand stole neth the napery to be met by that of my loved-one which awaited me as a bird awaits its mate.

"Up Jenkins!" cried Swank gaily. I crushed him with a look. But my caution was useless. At his end of the table Lord Wimpole was already far gone in drink. He was playing a harmonica, his favorite pastime when thus afflicted. Back of his chair Effendi patiently awaited his final collapse. His mental attitude was particularly quarrelsome and as the libations gained their mastery he became more and more provocative until Lady Wimpole rose with a sigh and moved toward the tent entrance. There she turned and her lips silently framed the words "Follow me," a command I was able to obey almost instantly as my host was engaged in an interminable story which he had told twice before.

Stepping beyond the circle of light I peered into the gloom. Lady Sarah's figure was dimly

visible, a patch of gray against the blackness. Joining her we strolled well beyond ear-shot. And yet we did not speak.

What was in our hearts lay too deep for words. It was the moment of supreme renunciation. She looked long and searchingly in my eyes and at last words came.

"My Sheik!" she murmured, resting her hands on my shoulders.

I drew her, trembling, to me.

"Lady Sarah," I whispered, lifting her heavy fringe of bobbed hair that she might hear my low heart's cry, "my Sarah of the Sahara, we have had our little hour, thee and I. Now, by the law of thy people we must part. But by the law of my adopted people, the Moplabs, thou art mine, my desert woman, my sweet sand lark."

She drew back affrighted. Though I had spoken before in an exalted strain I had never so definitely approached the topic of love. Then she took my hand again.

"O, El-Dhub,—" she said, "what you say is sweet and true. Thy words are as the nightingale's song. My heart and my love are indeed thine, but see how I am encompassed . . . By all the laws of

my people I am bound to my over-lord yonder . . . I cannot free myself . . .”

From the glowing tent burst a wild strain of harmonica music, fierce, exultant.

“God pity me!” I cried. “Farewell!”

Choking with emotion I staggered to the tent.

“Swank!—Whinney!—we start at once.”

They tumbled from their places.

“You are mad! At this hour? Man alive . . .”

“Very well . . . Call Ab-Domen . . . he and I will start ahead with four camels. I must ride tonight.”

As they obeyed my order Lady Sarah slipped by me into the tent, her eyes dark with pain. Ab-Domen sleepily led out a small group of camels and the necessities for our advance party.

“Due East,” I said to Whinney, “leave out Tabala and proceed to the next station at Ham-mababa. We will await you there.”

“Right-o—Goodbye . . . and good luck. We ought to get there in three days.”

My friends turned in for they needed sleep badly. A few moments later Ab-Domen and I were ready for departure. Suddenly a piercing scream rang from the Wimpoles’ tents and Lady Sarah rushed into the night.

"El-Dhub!"

"Here," I answered.

"O, take me with you. Look . . . he has done it again."

She held up her arm and I saw the deep teeth marks of her dog of a husband.

"Damn him . . . I will kill him 'ere we go."

"No, no," she cried. "I think I have done that . . . I struck him . . . with a chafing dish."

"Up, then . . . mount."

She took her place on one of the camels. There was no thought of hesitation. Forth we fared on the swiftest of my bactrians forth into the velvet night. Our camels travelled tactfully side by side. So matched were their gaits that Lady Sarah could rest her head on my shoulder as we rode. It was not until six hours later, in the dawn, that I discovered that sometime during the night Abdomen, the wily old devil, had given us the slip.

CHAPTER X

Death in the Desert

CHAPTER X

"Do you see anything?"

"No." I lowered my binoculars.

"Straordinary!"

Lady Sarah spoke casually but I detected the undertone of anxiety in her voice.

We had now been three days in the desert. To put the matter shortly, we were lost. Gaze as we might there was no sign of the Hammababa station nor of any other. Ab-Domen Allah's defection had doubtless been well-meant. Under more sophisticated conditions he had acted similarly before; but his absence now was deadly serious. Versed as he was in the art of star-reading, a member in good standing of the Desert Trails Club, it would have been simple for him to set us on the right track. Also, relying on his knowledge I had taken no pains to look up constellations, distances, or direction. Our progress was a blind advance, made the more so by our blinding love.

Ah, Sarah, my desert dish, canst thou forget that joyous pilgrimage neath the myriad eyes of night, throughout which I ever remained thy slave, reverent, respectful, devoted?

Be that as it may, we should have come up with Hammababa long ago but never so much as a palm frond had we seen. The devil of a camel is that once off the proper direction he keeps right on in the wrong one without the slightest deviation. Nothing like instinct ever troubles them. The desert is sprinkled with the bones of fool beasts that have pursued this single-track policy into places where there wasn't a sign of sustenance and where they have just naturally died.

This thought did not cheer me any more than the condition of our water supply. I figured that if we had overshot Hammababa we might possibly hit the water-hole at Rhat, but this was a long chance which I should have hated to back with any real money.

When one is lost in the desert one doesn't say much about it. It is not at all like being on the wrong road in a motor where a man's wife always knows he is wrong and loudly proclaims it. Lady Sarah was a trump; she never peeped. We just kept plodding on late at night and early in the

morning, resting during the heat of the day and neither of us voicing our suspicions. Finally on the morning of the fourth day I thought it was up to me to say something.

"Do you know, Lady Sarah," I began—"I suspect that this sort of thing isn't getting us anywhere."

"Nowhere that matters apparently," she said calmly. Then, pointing skyward. "Have you seen those kites?"

I *had* seen them, first one, then two . . . then two more . . . appearing for just a second in the sky, then vanishing, and I knew what they meant. Shaking off a chill of forboding I dismissed the foul creatures with an intrepid wave of my hand.

"Our bones were not born to be bleached," I said cheerily.

"Here's hoping," was the brave reply.

Thus began the fourth day. It was a day of forced riding. Riding the lead-camel I urged the beasts to their best gait, keeping a close eye on my pocket compass.

"Hew to the East, let the sand fall where it may," was my thought. Pad . . . fell the cushioned feet of our animals, pad . . . pad . . . pad . . . mile after mile into nothingness. From

noon until four o'clock we rested, then, on—until nearly midnight when we sank exhausted for a few hours' sleep. Food and water supply were running low. "Tomorrow," I thought, "we *must* find something!" closing my eyes on the desperate hope.

I awoke to a fresh catastrophe. In organizing our flight-caravan Ab-Domen had included an extra pack-camel, an Asian dromedary, the meanest type known to man. This made five beasts in all. Due to thirst and exhaustion they were nervous and irritable. The sound which aroused me was a loud roar almost human in its savageness.

The dromedary had attacked my high spirited mount and before I could shout a word of command or interfere in any way the entire group were mixed in an inextricable battle-royal. A fight between two camels is a dangerous thing to approach; five made a storm center which was as menacing as a buzz-saw.

Amid a wild bellowing they charged, bumped, bit, kicked, whirled and fell, lashing, thrashing, smashing . . . my heart sank as I heard the rending crack of bone against bone. After a mad half-hour they lay compactly locked, exhausted, blood-shot, panting and glaring, hump locked with

hump, teeth bedded in soft flesh, legs protruding at every angle like a pile of animal jack-straws.

When I was able to drag them, one by one, apart I knew that the worst had befallen us. Out of twenty legs, seventeen were broken! Not a single beast was able to stand.

"Tremendous, wasn't it?" said Lady Sarah.

I nodded. In spite of its import the tragedy could not fail to be spectacular.

"Better milk the female," I said.

Lady Sarah managed to extract about a gallon from our only cow-camel. With heavy hearts and heavier loads we began our fateful march across the wastes—afoot.

Just how long or how far we walked is not quite clear in my mind. At times we were unreasonably gay. Day and night became confused. We struggled on when we were not too exhausted. Snatches of an old refrain, "The Japanese Sand-man," burst from my lips; then I would sing the old Indian love lyric "Cold hands I held, behind the Samo-va-ah, where are you now,—where are-ah you now?" And we would both weep, watching our tears vanish in the aridity underfoot, "like snow upon the desert's dusty face."

On an undated day we lay down for what we

felt to be our last rest. We had done our best and it was not enough. In the early dawn Fate mocked us again. A tractor caravan passed at a distance of half a mile, part of the regular bus line between Tripoli and Assouan, their head lights shining dimly in the wan light. Struggling to my feet I tried to run toward them. Ignominious though it might be to be rescued by such contraptions I had another's life to consider. "Jitney!" I shouted—"Jitney," but the noise of their motors drowned my voice and, the effort proving too much, I fell forward, gazing mournfully after the receding tail-lights, two dim, red sparks that rose and fell and vanished.

"What was it?" asked Lady Sarah, half-aroused.

"Citroens," I answered.

"French . . . for lemons," she said with a weak smile, sinking again to lethargy.

Later in the day we managed to advance a few miles. I think we crawled part of the way. All supplies were now exhausted. I was burned like a cinder; Lady Sarah was a flaming red—she never tanned; she was peeling, I remember, but still beautiful. Suddenly I sank back and pointed with trembling finger—"Look! Look!" I cried through cracked lips.

Before us not over a mile away, in a low depression of the desert, lay water! blessed water, fringed with green trees, to which I could see animals coming to drink, impola, umpahs, gazelles and countless birds.

"The Rhat-hole," I shouted, "Courage! dear witch; we shall win through yet."

Yard by yard we made our painful advance. The details grew clearer until in my fevered imagination I could hear the cool splash of the pool. And then, with the suddenness of a cinema fade-out the picture vanished.

"Mirage," I gasped.

There was no answer. Lady Sarah had fainted.

A hoarse kite-cackle sounded in my ears as I too sank in merciful oblivion.

CHAPTER XI

Antony and Cleopatra

CHAPTER XI

"You say you followed the kites?" I asked.

"Yes, Your Altitude," said Ab-Domen, "for several days I kept away, for I thought you might wish . . . that is . . . the lady . . ."; he grinned maliciously.

"It was not pre-arranged," I said coldly.

"Then I began to see the birds," he continued. "I was worried. When I found your smashed camels—by the way, you were lucky in one respect for the beasts attracted the birds and held them back for a day—then I was really worried. I knew I should be useless without supplies so I rode at top speed to the caravan, changed camels for horses and overtook you—just in time."

"Good old Ab-Domen," said Lady Sarah patting the oriental's shoulder.

We were resting at the Rhat-hole which was not so far away as we had supposed. The mirage we had seen was of the close-range variety and had

we had sufficient strength to keep on we might have reached it for ourselves.

Our camp was at some distance from the pool in order not to disturb the wild life to which it is so necessary a feature. These desert water-holes differ in character from the South African variety. The vegetation is less dense and more low-growing and the animals are mostly limited to those of the locality, jerboa, jackals, whiffle-hens and so on.

We did no shooting for it has always seemed to me extremely unsporting to kill unsuspecting animals while they are satisfying their thirst. It was sufficiently entertaining to sit quietly in our compound and watch the amazing variety of visitors to the filthy but refreshing waters. Being the only source of supply in a large area it was occasionally visited by creatures whose natural habitat was many miles away. Among others a lean elephant who had evidently strayed far from his haunts to the southward. He was one of the lop-eared Sudanese type, almost dying of thirst. It was interesting to see how in his case necessity became the mother of invention for, having drunk as much as he could, he proceeded to fill his trunk against future need, hanging the end over his ear in order to conserve the precious liquid.

Here, too, we got our first hint of the distant Nile country toward which we were aiming. A group of ibis stalked along the edge of the pool while, keeping very much to himself, I saw a specimen of the rare Egyptian wart-hog whose snout is spiraled to aid him in piercing the sand in search of lizard-eggs, his favorite food.

Our way was now comparatively easy. We were in the region of Anglo-Egyptian influence where the efficiency of the British Government has established a chain of oases at distances much nearer than that provided by nature. Where water does not exist in natural wells it has been reached by boring or is piped in. Ab-Domen checked off the list of probable station stops. Wun, Borku, Liffi Ganda—the largest of the artesian oases,—Bongo, Meshra and so on, straight to the Egyptian frontier . . .

It seemed unwise to leave Ab-Domen at this juncture for every time I had done so the results had been unfortunate. As I looked back on my plight in Azad's camp and my narrow escape from death in the company of my bronze beauty I realized that now, if ever, was a time for playing safe. Lord Wimpole was left behind, a thing of the past, lost, to all intents and purposes, in the desert.

"He was carted off to Tabala the morning after you and Lady Sarah left," Swank told me. "He hadn't come-to when they started so I don't know how he took her departure."

Much I cared! I snapped my fingers.

Restored to health, nourished with a generous supply of delicious food, my monumental desert mate was more lovely than ever. The peeling process was over and she appeared re-born, a creature of red and gold. How I looked forward to the Nile, with all its romantic associations.

The river came in sight at last after what seemed interminable days crossing the low Wady Mahall hills. Late one afternoon I caught its silver sheen where it wound its way between the fresh green of the rice fields.

"Look!" I pointed. "'Tis the Nile, O, my beloved."

"My Antony!" . . . she scarcely breathed the name. She was really wonderful in her way of catching the spirit and elevation of the moment; her early education must have been thorough.

Our last day's march was through fields of Egyptian cotton and Lady Sarah made a remark that startled me.

"Horace owns slathers of this," she said.

I grimaced at the name which showed she was thinking of him, and quickly drew her attention to a lovely field of sesame and lilies planted in alternate rows. Here and there a band of native workmen were weeding the vegetable-ivory-plants in preparation for the annual inundation. So shallow was the alluvial loam that their rude implements frequently reached the underlying sand rich with the records of past centuries, for this entire valley is but the graveyard of earlier civilizations. Our passing excited mild wonder and one brawny Nubian tossed me a skull which Whinney said was clearly that of a man of the bone-age. How petty seemed the ticking of my wrist-watch measured by the chronology of these mute memorials!

We intercepted the river in its upper reaches between the third and fourth cataracts, which are little more than rapids. In the village of Hannik we rested, part of the caravan continuing to Red Sea ports while my camels guided by Ab-Domen turned northward along the river bank. Acting as my advance agent the faithful Turk made splendid arrangements for river boats between the cataracts and lower down at Assouan I found a magnificent dahabeah.

AN EGYPTIAN DEITY

Bel-Toto, one of the lovely servitors of Lady Sarah on her dahabeah, the El-Sali.





An Egyptian Deity

It was the most comfortable craft of its kind that could be devised and was painted a brilliant emerald green, Lady Sarah's favorite color. Ab-Domen had not overlooked her name, El-Sali, in the vernacular, which adorned the bow. Crew, supplies, all were in readiness.

In the cabins lay fresh clothes suited to the locality and climate. A native *fellah* in immaculate white bounded forth whenever I clapped my hands while Lady Sarah's needs were looked after by a dusky Syrian maid who fawned at her feet or swung her fan until we sent her away on one pretext or another. My desert queen was a gorgeous picture when she first mounted the companion-way steps and stood under the green and white awning. She wore a *kaftan* or portiere of brilliant blue draped over her shoulders, its fringe in which were hung small silver bells, reaching to her knees. This was supplemented by green silk trousers of ankle length, sandals and a soft scarf. All nails, both toe and finger, were bright with rouge and the underlids of her eyes were deep blue with native Kohl. She was an arresting sight.

Everywhere were jewels or pendant ornaments, bangles for wrist and ankle, and long jade ear-

rings so that she clinked when she walked like a tray-full of drinks. I had donned a light weight burnous of two-inch striped material suitable for a man in the early forties and discarded my heavy Moplah turban for a *tarbush*. Our servants, overcome by our beauty, backed down the companion-way crying upon Allah to protect them from such blighting splendor.

Of all the days of my life those which succeeded are perhaps the most beautiful. Can one imagine more exquisite conditions? Alone with the object of one's adoration on the wonderful Nile, the most sentimental and sedimental of rivers. It was a voyage through Paradise, the life of lovers in lotus-land . . .

Swank and Whinney, in a smaller craft, followed our course. For the passengers of El-Sali life was an uninterrupted dream. Day followed bright day in this rainless land while we drifted lazily on our way watching the panorama of palms and quiet river life, natives gathering locusts from which they squeezed the honey, green-and-gold ichneumons flashing in the sun, shimmering fields of henna and fragrant basil, fishermen seeking ancient carp and the curious *boyad* which has feathers in place of scales, children playing with

a *tetrodon* or ball-fish which they toss about gaily, whispering groves of mulberry trees, marshes pink with mallow amid which stood flaming flamingos and ibis both sacred and profane, water buffalo, okaki, coneys . . . there was no end to the variety and interest. Occasionally we stopped at native villages and wandered in to the little bazaars inspecting the curious wares, purchasing here and there a graceful reed basket, an ornament of native turquoise and silver or a roughly cut emerald from the mines at Jebel Zabara.

Ab-Domen had given orders for our entertainment and nightly we were hailed by dancers and singers from the shore or in boats. These came aboard, Swank and Whinney joined us and we watched their performances. Some of the der-vishes were remarkable.

Further down the river we began to pass the tombs and monuments of the ancient dynasties and here the entertainments became more and more elaborate for Ab-Domen cleverly utilized the crumbling temples, gigantic columns and seated figures as a background for the performers. At the temple of Philae, notably, he put on a superb show with three principals and a chorus of six Egyptian beauties which caused Swank and

Whinney to tie their dahabeah alongside forthwith.

Late into the starry night I sat with my loved one, continuing the story of my life which had been so often interrupted, filling in the details of my college career with its mad, glad days and then my plunge into exploration, the wonderful things I had accomplished, the people I had met, the honors . . . it is not my way to talk about myself but I felt I should tell all to this wonderful woman. She was such a superb listener, quiet, mute.

"Say something," I murmured, brushing her locks, sweet with jasmine and asphodel, "speak, my oleander."

"I am speechless," she said.

I have always loved women of that sort, the simple, quiet ones,—broad between the eyes,—are they bovine? stupid? I do not know. They listen to me.

Thus Lady Sarah lay in her *chaise-longue*, quiet, smiling, listening to my odyssey. Sometimes her eyes closed and it almost seemed she slept . . .

CHAPTER XII

The Tomb of Dimitrino

CHAPTER XII

It is not my way to pass through a country without drawing from it as much information and interest as possible. All my life I have been a close student of archeology and here was an opportunity not to be missed of pursuing certain investigations which had been attempted by others and which I myself had begun and abandoned when the war called all able-bodied men to the colors.

Like all Englishwomen Lady Sarah had a keen interest in investigations of this sort and heartily seconded the suggestion that I should give a day or two to the clearing up of some of the dynastic mysteries which have baffled historians for many years.

"But I can't go with you, my dear," she said. "These pyramids and sphinxes and things are simply infested with people from home . . . it wouldn't do, you know . . . after I get my divorce, all right, but until then . . ."

How sane she was!

I left her in the dahabeah, watched over by Ab-Domen who had by this time safely convoyed his camels to Cairo.

"For three days only," I whispered, holding her tightly, "more than that I could not bear," and without daring to look back I fled.

My objective was in the nearby terrain of the Valley of Kings but I knew better than to search in the actual valley itself which has been completely mused by the hundreds of excavators who have sought the missing chapters of Egyptian history. Here, it is true, they have found much that is interesting and worth-while. The recent discovery of the tomb of King Tut-Ankh-Amen was a creditable performance. But I was after bigger game than that!

In beginning my quest I was greatly aided by certain papers which I had purchased many years ago from an old Levantine in Aden. He knew little of their value or I should never have secured them but vague markings on the first documents told me that the packet belonged originally in the library of Alexander the Great. Later they found their way into the archives of the Bab-el-Mandeb himself. Need I say more?

I therefore kept to the north of the beaten track of exploration. The expressions on the faces of numerous excavating parties which we passed were amusing. They considered me insane to search for buried testimony in a location to which no reference was made in their data. Such is the narrowness of many learned men.

Our group was small consisting of not more than a score of *doolahs* in addition to my usual companions Swank and Whinney. Five camels carried the provisions and tools. The indications contained in my papers was so precise that I felt that I could verify their statements with very little delay. Either they were true or false and that could be soon determined.

It was necessary to lay a very careful course following the exact compass-directions of my palimpsest. This done we were soon swallowed up in the immensity of the desert. It was strange how, like a great mother, the land enveloped and enfolded us. But now I trudged it with different feelings for back of me, waiting in the dahabeah, was Sarah, my tiger-mate, my tawny desert-rose! Our plan was to go immediately to Paris where she was to join the American divorce colony, for she wished to be forever freed from her outrageous

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ASSOUAN

Native musician performing on the Balipsa, one of the earliest Egyptian wind-instruments.



On the Outskirts of Assouan

husband. This being decided, I urged her to make haste so that the teeth-marks might still be shown in evidence, for they were rapidly paling. Wimpole!—the cur . . . what had become of him?

Revolving these matters we marched on, stopping at the end of five hours for luncheon and a siesta. Here the *doolahs* resorted to a curious trick for, by wriggling their bodies, they wormed their way into the sand and completely disappeared save for an occasional toe, elbow or knee-cap which lay, oddly detached, on the burning floor. In this way they escaped the direct rays of the deadly sun. Three hours later the march was resumed.

Not long after I ordered a halt. We had reached a point as near as I wished to go to the object of my search, for it was a part of my plan to make the actual discovery alone. Much as I respected the two men who were with me I was too old a bird to ignore the fact that practically every great discovery is marred by an attempt to divide the credit. In matters of this sort it is best to be alone.

Camp for the night being established I quietly strolled off by myself. The sun still hung well above the horizon and I estimated that I had fully

two hours of daylight, though I took an electric flash light as an extra precaution. The character of the surrounding country was peculiar in the extreme, consisting of thousands of small dome-like hills like bee-hives, each so like the other that my sense of orientation was instantly lost. Not over a half a mile from camp I looked for our party and realized with a start that I was searching in exactly the opposite direction from the right one.

"Careful!" I thought, studying my compass: "this is dangerous country to travel in."

In a few moments the camp had disappeared. Proceeding with the greatest care and constantly consulting both my papers and my compass I steered as straight a course as possible between the soft hillocks. An evening wind was rising and I noticed that its slightest breath was sufficient to ripple the hill-sides like shaken silk. In a stronger blast the mounds must actually move. Not without a sense of disquiet I observed that the landscape back of me had already changed slightly—or did it only seem so?

One hour of my precious time had passed. Should I go on—or return? Hesitating, a fresh detail lured me forward. To the north-west and

dominating the surrounding mounds rose one considerably higher. According to my documents I should now be at the site of the most astounding discovery possible in this corner of the world. Resolved to make a last inspection from this hill I made my way toward it.

Even as I ascended its eastern side a thrill crept up my spine for I could see that the ground sloped sharply away to the west which, my papers said, it should do. And on the top of the knoll I stood aghast.

Yes! it was true. I had found it. I, Walter Traprock, American, stood awed, silent and alone, looking down into the Lost Valley of Bulls, the burial place of Dimitrino, the First of the Pharaohs.

Let me say here that I do not belittle the importance of Tut-Ankh-Amen, but may I also point out that he has been widely acclaimed because he was the *last* of the Pharaohs? Dimitrino, I repeat, was the *first*. It is obvious to whom the greater credit must go. Year after year, for centuries, historians have groped for some allusion, some hint which should guide them to the spot which lay before me.

The tomb occupied the center of a small valley

in which the purple dusk already lay heavy. Against my better judgment, chuckling excitedly, I ploughed down the sloping banks, passed between two gigantic porphyry bulls and finally stood beside the mausoleum itself. Though intending to make only a cursory examination one exciting detail led to another. The smoothly worked granite blocks with their close joints excited my wonder. Near the top of the dome in a band of ornamentation I noted a bronze ring artfully worked in the design. It was comparatively easy to climb the curving sides and reach this stone. It was large and I had not the faintest idea that it would move. Imagine my surprise then when it slid slowly under a strong pull and I gazed down through a square opening into the blackness of the actual burial chamber. With a thrill of fear I bent forward, head and shoulders through the aperture and flooded the great room with my flashlight. Wonder of wonders! What splendors lay below me.

I had only time to glimpse a dazzling array of gold and brilliant color when my legs were suddenly lifted up from behind and I was thrust violently forward through the opening. Twisting as I fell I quickly flashed my light upward. The

great stone was slowly sliding into place but in the narrowing space the beam of my flash fell on the distorted features of Horace Wimpole.

My head suddenly swam with dizziness and I fainted.

CHAPTER XIII

Buried Alive

CHAPTER XIII

My revival was sudden and violent. For a second I lay semi-conscious; then realizing my predicament, every fibre rebelled at the ridiculous situation. Caught . . . caught again, like a rat in my own trap. Blindly I rushed about in the blackness of the tomb. Underfoot resounded the crash of fragile furniture, the splintering of priceless relics. My head struck some sort of musical instrument built on the tambourine order which fell to the floor with a weird jangling of copper discs. Then I stumbled over a great urn and lay panting amid the fragments.

Where was my light? In a sickening panic I groped for it . . . thank God! my hand closed about it almost instantly . . . perspiration dripped from my forehead. I did not press the button of my flash at once. Somewhat calmed by its possession I brooded bitterly, glad that the darkness could hide me from myself. Fool! . . . *fool* that

I was to have been so trapped . . . to have felt so fatuously secure. Not a thought had I given to Wimpole during my exquisite "*rêve d'amour*." He was dismissed . . . waved away like a wraith. But he had materialized.

How had he done it?

A score of answers thronged my brain. Disguised, perhaps he had accompanied me, mingling with my humble *doolahs* or, more probably, had followed me, keeping apart, weaving his way, snake-like, through the hills, watching and waiting to strike the dastard blow. G'r-r-r . . . I ground my teeth in impotent rage.

But stay . . . this was idiotic. Gradually I calmed and for the first time switched on my light. Playing it on the ceiling I realized that all trace of the moveable stone was lost in the complicated decoration. Climbing a wall which curves inward is one of the most difficult feats in the world, though I have been able to do it in the past. But now it seemed so futile. Any search of the ceiling would have lacked direction. Without moving I gazed sombrely about me.

I was buried alive, there was no getting away from that. Having chewed this bitter cud for several minutes I resolved to put my spiritual

house in order, so to speak. My first act was to make my will, something I had frequently proposed and as often postponed. It occurred to me now that my position was probably unique in drawing up this last testament after I had been entombed. All that I possessed I left to Lady Sarah in fee simple or to her heirs or assigns forever, to have and to hold, from now on until death us do part—the form was strictly legal and I signed Whinney's name as witness, per W. E. T. to make all sure.

“And now,” I thought, “for my last words.” In vain I tried to evolve some simple, compact sentence which would epitomize my entire life but the subject was too large. Finally I compromised on a five-hundred word obituary outlining the main events of my career. I then recited what I could remember of the burial service and considered that I had been decently laid away.

With these rites performed I could composedly take stock of my surroundings for it occurred to me that I could put my time to no better use than by writing a careful inventory of the contents of the mausoleum. That much at least could remain as my legacy to the culture of the world. Then for the first time I realized the magnitude of the

discovery in which I had so completely lost myself.

For the benefit of those interested in archeology I will give a mere outline of the main features, the principal one of which was, of course, the basalt sarcophagus of the King himself. Beside this in a similar receptacle a few sizes smaller lay his favorite Queen, Heck-To. Ranged about the walls was a dazzling array of royal furniture, boxes, chairs, beds, chariots, tables, vases and so on. All the latter were of solid gold heavily encrusted with gems. Many of the vessels were filled with food but the contents of the wine jars had unfortunately evaporated so that I could only look forward to dry fare for a brief period.

The picture writing on the walls was of immense interest and showed Dimitrino at his favorite pursuits, hawking, hunting, catching scarabs and playing Mah Jong which even in his day was an old game. One intimate close-up portrayed the monarch using a dial system telephone which the modern world is now re-discovering with so much trouble. Another section showed him teaching archery to his son who afterwards became Melachrino I.

Numerous passages were in verse which, in

hieroglyphics, is effected by rhyming the symbols in idea, a bird with an egg, a bow with an arrow, a snake with a woman, and so on. A scene very lovely in color, depicted the Queen's mother, Eks-Ito, being devoured by vultures, the King and his son looking on.

About the sarcophagus stood the tutelary divinities, Psh, Shs, Pst and Tkt, the big four of their day. The queen's lid bore an intaglio of Thothmes indicating that she had a hare-lip. Hundreds of articles I listed carefully in my note-book, becoming completely absorbed in my work.

Then gradually a chill horror numbed my body. *My light was going out!* There was no doubt about it. It was fainter than it had been. The battery was fading. To die, thus, in the dark! . . . horrible. My determination to complete my catalogue drove me to fresh effort. Having completed the movable objects I made a closer inspection of the sarcophagus itself. On the top carved in high relief lay a coiled snake. As I reached my hand toward it, to my amazement, its head raised and I saw the coils stiffen. Across my brain flashed the thought that this was the King's "Ka," his spiritual familiar and guardian. But no, that was rot; the creature was alive!

Subconsciously a ray of hope sprang in my breast. Not realizing just why, I reached my light toward the serpent. When it had almost touched him he glided silently over the edge of the stone, dropped with a thud on the tiled floor and flowed like a black stream to the edge, back of a delicate table, where he disappeared.

In a frenzy I hurled the furniture out of the way and cast myself on the floor playing my light before me. There was the snake's exit, where a tile was loosened against the side wall. And if his exit, why not mine?

Idiot, not to have thought of it before! The construction of tombs is peculiar. They have practically no foundations. In this country with no frosts or moisture it is only necessary to go an inch or two below the level of the hard-packed sand. Dashing the tile aside I felt the surface below. It was friable and crumbled easily under my hand. Scratching the sand deeply with my penknife I scraped up the top layer with a shallow copper bowl. In another moment I was burrowing madly like an excited mole.

In an hour I was completely submerged. My flash was thrust in my breast pocket where I could occasionally play its waning beam on the

tunnel before me. But I soon learned to do my work in the dark, passing the sand back of me and worming my way forward. Above me I could feel the masonry of the enclosing wall, first on my head, then my shoulders, waist . . . legs . . . I was free of it.

As I began to turn my tunnel upward the sound of a solid slump caused me to play the light over my shoulder and look back as well as I could. A large mass of sand had fallen from the roof of the tunnel. Not being able to dig with my feet or to turn in the passage any retreat was cut off. It was do or die now and with desperate energy I wielded my scoop.

Strange that I did not reach the surface! On, on, I went and still there was no light ahead. My sense of direction became confused. Was I going upward or digging my grave deeper and more irrevocably in the arid earth. My strength, unusual though it is, was giving out and this dreadful doubt as to my direction served further to sap my energy. "One hundred more scoops"—I vowed . . . still no air . . . fifty more . . . twenty-five . . . ten . . . one . . . I broke through. Air, blessed air, cool and refreshing as water. Panting I lay with only my head above ground. It

was night, and such a night! blowing a gale with the wind heavily freighted with sand. But amid the stinging drifts I rolled over and slept the sleep of a child.

The bright sun woke me and I staggered to my feet shaking the sand from my garments and staring stupidly before me. My experience came back slowly like a confused dream. The tomb. O, yes . . . the tomb . . . but where was it? I rubbed my eyes. There was no tomb. And then I realized what had happened.

During my incarceration the gale had heaped the sand-drifts about my prison until it was completely covered. No trace or trail indicated its position. Of my tunnel there was not a vestige and I realized why it had taken me so long to reach the surface.

The entire topography had changed. Wily old Dimitrino! To tuck his tomb away in this shifting, evasive landscape where he was literally here today and gone tomorrow!

Thank Heavens my compass could not run down and I still had my records. At the thought of the return trip memory re-illuminated the flame of anger but, close on its searing glow, burst the effulgence of love. Faint from hun-

ger but buoyed by my inextinguishable passion
I stumbled through the distorted territory where,
verily, as the old Hebrew says, "the little hills skip
like rams."

CHAPTER XIV

Love Lost

CHAPTER XIV

Early in the dawn I began my return. The wind had fallen and progress was not difficult. Once out of the curious hill country which had again taken the lost Valley of Bulls into its embrace it was a simple matter to locate my camp which was the only visible object in the open desert. My companions were overjoyed at my return for, though an overnight absence on my part was not unusual, they were always anxious until I put in an appearance.

But their welcome was submerged in their wonder at my orders for an immediate return to As-souan.

"What's the idea?" questioned Swank, "we've just got here, we've accomplished nothing; it's . . ."

I cut him short with a severe glance vouchsafing only the remark "Foul play is afoot. Make haste."

He saw that something serious had happened

and obeyed unquestioningly. The rank and file of my safari were delighted at the prospect of getting back to the comforts of the more civilized river-life. More than once it was on my lips to tell my American companions the story of my entombment with all its possibilities of future riches and fame, but the thought of Lady Sarah lay too heavily on my heart. This burden of apprehension I must carry alone. Weighed down with my individual anguish I plodded silently across the sand, my mind too busy with pictures of what might have happened to even note the signs of our progress, the merging of the desert into the fertile fields with their long lines of irrigation ditches, the flourishing plantations of capsicum and marrows alive with chattering apteryxes and flocks of four-horned sheep.

With a start I realized that we were on the outskirts of Assouan.

"Come with me," I said, detaching my fellow countrymen from the natives. We ran on ahead and soon came in sight of the El-Sali moored by the river bank. She was ominously quiet. Bursting into the salon I gazed upon a picture which was the exact counterpart of my most lurid imagining. The room was a wreck, curtains torn

down, vases broken, rugs twisted, chairs and tables overturned. Ab-Domen lay unconscious under the ruins of the victrola. A low moaning from the apartment beyond led us to Lady Sarah's maid, likewise in the stupor of exhaustion.

When at last the faithful dragoman was partially revived he breathed a harrowing story of assault and abduction.

"Lord Wimpole came . . ." he gasped . . . "he had twenty men . . . Lady El Sali fought like a tigress . . . you see? . . ." he motioned weakly at the surrounding chaos . . . "I, too, did my best . . ."

"Where did they go?"

He shook his head. "Down river . . . where to I do not know." ..

There is an excellent highway along the Nile bank from Assouan to the Delta. In half an hour we were on our way, mounted on the best of our horses.

"Sarah!" I screamed in my agony, "it can not be that we have lost each other so soon!"

My only hope was that Wimpole, solacing himself with the thought that he had effectually put me *hors de combat*, would loiter on his way. But this ray was soon extinguished for inquiry at the

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PYRAMID

Zaloofa, the slave girl, wearing the costume of the native Awabodas.



In the Shadow of the Pyramid

villages on our route informed us that the Englishman's party had gone through by motor! At the word my heart sank; all thought of overtaking him was out of the question. Yet, desperately, we kept on.

It was late at night when the lights of Cairo twinkled in the distance. Leaving our horses and chartering a powerful car we were soon speeding towards Alexandria. The first sun's rays lighted the listless sails and gleaming hulls of the ships at anchor, battered tramps and giant liners from overseas, trim yachts, an occasional sombre battleship and thousands of sturdy fishing craft. Two vessels were my immediate object, the Wimpole's Undine and my own Kawa. A long scrutiny from the rising ground back of the Port failed to disclose them. Parking our car we lost ourselves in the forest of masts along the harbor's edge. It was impossible that Triplett had failed me but locating him was like finding one's automobile after a football game. Standing on various pier heads I cupped my hands and bellowed "Kawa-a-hoy" until I was twice threatened with arrest by the local constabulary. Meanwhile Swank and Whinney were paging my captain in other directions, the former cruising about in a rented rowboat while the

latter conducted a personal canvass of the waterside drinking-parlors. In one of these Triplett was eventually discovered. He was amazed at my early arrival.

"I didn't look fur ye fur a week," he protested.

"Is the Undine in the harbor?" I asked.

"Wuz, last night . . . takin' on supplies all day; moved out by the lighthouse at sundown."

"Quick, man; let's get aboard. We must board her."

The Kawa lay surrounded by a huddle of small boats the crews of which objected violently to being shoved aside but we forced our way through and eventually cleared the end of the pier and stood out toward the mole, our kicker-motor chugging valiantly. I had fetched my glasses from below and soon located the Undine. She was nearly two miles distant and to my consternation showed every indication of being about to get under weigh.

"We must make better time," I urged. "Can't we crowd on more sail or do something nautical?"

"Crowd on nothin'," said Triplett. "Wind's dead agin us." He spat sourly as was his wont and I knew from the glint of his one useful eye that what man could do he would do. Foot by foot we

crept up on the slender Undine out of whose buff funnel smoke poured with increasing volume. We could now see the glint of her brass work and read the name under her stern. The squeak of the davit-blocks reached us as the tiny launch was hauled up and swung in-board; then came the clink, clink of the capstan. It was up-anchor now and no mistake.

At that moment Swank made one of the greatest blunders of his life and that is saying a lot. Overcome by excitement he seized a large megaphone and before I could stop him raised it and howled "Undine a-hoy!"

"Fool!" I shouted striking the instrument from his grasp.

It was the very thing which he should not have done. In quiet we might have slipped alongside. Now all was activity aboard the yacht. Sailors ran to and fro, bells rang sharply, the anchor swung dripping over the bow and a lather of white foam bubbled up from the obedient screws.

We were not over a hundred yards away. In desperation I seized the megaphone. "Stop, in the name of the law," I shouted; it was all I could think of at the time.

A harsh laugh was my answer followed by a shriek, the well-known shriek of my beloved, which

tore my heart strings. In the salon I caught a glimpse of two struggling figures; then, just as other bulky forms intervened, a bright object flew through the open porthole. At that moment the Undine's stern swung toward us and gathering headway she shrank rapidly to a tiny speck on the distant horizon.

We hove-to. "Lower the dingy," I ordered. Alone I rowed toward the bright object which I had seen fly from the cabin window. If it were what I hoped . . . yes . . . a bottle. Within was the briefest sort of message, merely the word . . . "Ritz."

Back in my cabin I pondered in bitter perplexity. "Ritz?" It was a call to follow her . . . it was a meeting place . . . but which Ritz? There are so many.

I am not one to give up easily. Gradually a scheme formed in my mind. I would establish an inter-Ritz communication system with agents in all branches. Triplett's appearance in the doorway interrupted my ruminations.

"Where to, sir?" he asked.

"London," I replied and, a moment later, felt the Kawa veer toward the great English city.

.

Fate in her inscrutable way was to end my search almost before it had begun. Eight weeks later I sat in the tea room of the Ritz-Carlton in London. Opening my paper I scanned the headlines dealing with cable despatches, racing news and financial exchange until an item, brutal in its brevity, assaulted my attention as with a hammer stroke.

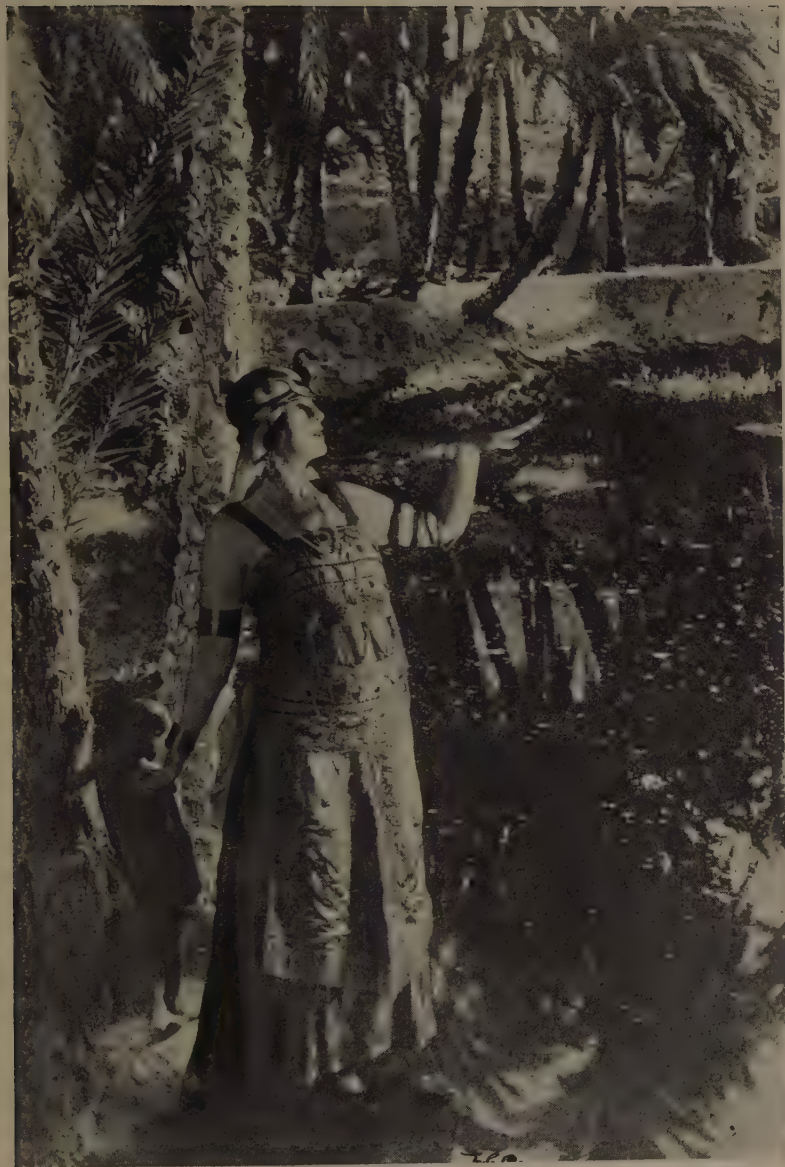
“Lady Sarah Wimpole Dead.”

The room swam about me. After a tremendous effort at self mastery I was able to read what followed.

“The death of Lady Sarah Wimpole, nee Alleyne, of Alleyne House and Wimpole Manor, Nottinghamshire, will come as a shock to her many friends. Her medical advisors, Dr. Keech and Dr. McGilvray, confess themselves as much mystified by the nature of the malady which has proved fatal. In all respects the symptoms were those of hydrophobia, which is not an admissible diagnosis since Lady Wimpole had but just recently landed from her yacht, the *Undine*, upon which she and Lord Wimpole have been cruising in Eastern waters. It is suspected that the disease may have been conveyed by a parrot of which the defunct Peeress was very fond and the bird—very wisely in our opinion—has been destroyed.”

SAD MEMORIES

"The smooth flowing Nile retains her reflection."



Sad Memories

How clearly the tragedy stood before my eyes. Wimpole, mad cur that he was, had had his way! My first impulse was to shoot him down as he deserved. Second thought said no. Let him live out his wretched life until un-reason claimed him as she was bound to do. Within a year he was incarcerated, a hopeless maniac, fighting and biting at his keepers.

Time has softened the pain of this, my most tragic adventure. Out of the wreckage of my hopes and dreams the lovely moments rise like mountains from mist. Sitting alone in my study, brooding over the romances of my life, none has quite the charm of this, the most disastrous and incomplete.

It was my plan—after Lady Sarah's divorce and our marriage—to return to the desert where we had great plans for commercial development, the building of sand-paper mills and hour-glass factories,—but there! These were but bubbles blown away by the touch of reality. With our few brief moments of complete joy I must be content.

That I should return to follow out our plans alone is inconceivable. All speaks too clearly of her influence who called me back to reign once more as El-Dhub ak Moplah. The sandy

desert is her likeness. The smooth flowing Nile retains her reflection. The rocky features of the Sphinx are those of my Sarah of the Sahara. Wullahy!

THE END



*A Selection from the
Catalogue of*

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

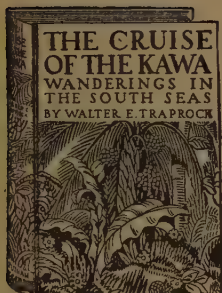


**Complete Catalogues sent
on application**

The Cruise of the Kawa

By

Dr. Walter E. Traprock,
F. R. S. S. E. U.



A delicious literary burlesque—superlatively amusing. Here are found the *wak-wak*, that horrid super-seamonster; the gallant *fatu-liva* birds who lay square eggs; the flowing *hoopa* bowl, and the sensuous *nabiscus* plant; the tantalizing, tatooing, fabulous folk music; the beautiful, trusting Filbertine women and their quaint marriage customs, as well as the dread results of the white man's coming—all described with a frank freedom, literary charm, and meticulous regard for truth which is delightful.

The Cruise of the Kawa stands unique among the literature of modern exploration. Nothing like it has ever come out of the South Seas. It is *the* travel book of years. Strikingly illustrated, too, from special photographs, it tells pictorially, as well as verbally, the exciting, amusing, and entertaining story of an exploration in the South Seas.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York

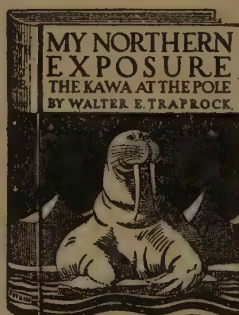
London

My Northern Exposure

The Kawa at the Pole

By

Walter E. Traprock



Similar in format to the famous *Cruise of the Kawa*, this new volume carries the reader on an exciting and riotously funny expedition to the frozen north. It is an account of the adventures of the redoubtable Dr. Traprock (and party)

who set out to discover the real North Pole—but undertake their voyage in a most unusual manner. The incidents, accidents, and final discoveries in this merry burlesque are certain to afford as much, if, indeed, not more enjoyment than the first *Kawa* story.

21 gorgeous full page illustrations.

G. P. Putnam's Sons

New York

London

STIRLINGSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.

COUNTY LIBRARY.

This book should be returned on or before the latest date entered below. If desired, an extension of the loan period may be granted.

DATE OF RETURN.	DATE OF RETURN.	DATE OF RETURN.
14 MAR 1928		
25 APR 1928		
9 MAY 1928		
27 FEB 1930		
28 APR 1930		
27 JAN 1931		
8 FEB 1931		
24 MAR 1931		
20 MAY 1931		
11 AUG 1931		
13 JUN 1932		

Education Authority

STIRLINGSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY.

No.....

LIBRARY SCHEME.

Class.....

VoIs.....

Readers are requested to take great care of the books while in their possession, and to point out any defect that they may observe in them to the Local Librarian.

All books should be returned to the Library within fourteen days from the date of issue; but an extension of the period of loan will be granted when desired.

If Infectious Disease breaks out in any house where there is a library book, the Honorary Local Librarian should be notified. The book itself must NOT be returned to the Local Library until further instructions are received. No fine will be payable under these conditions.

Students using the County Rural Libraries are reminded that the special resources of the Central Library for Scottish Students are available to them. Applications for service from this Central Library should be accompanied by particulars as to the books desired. All such applications should be made through the County Librarian.

5778

916

